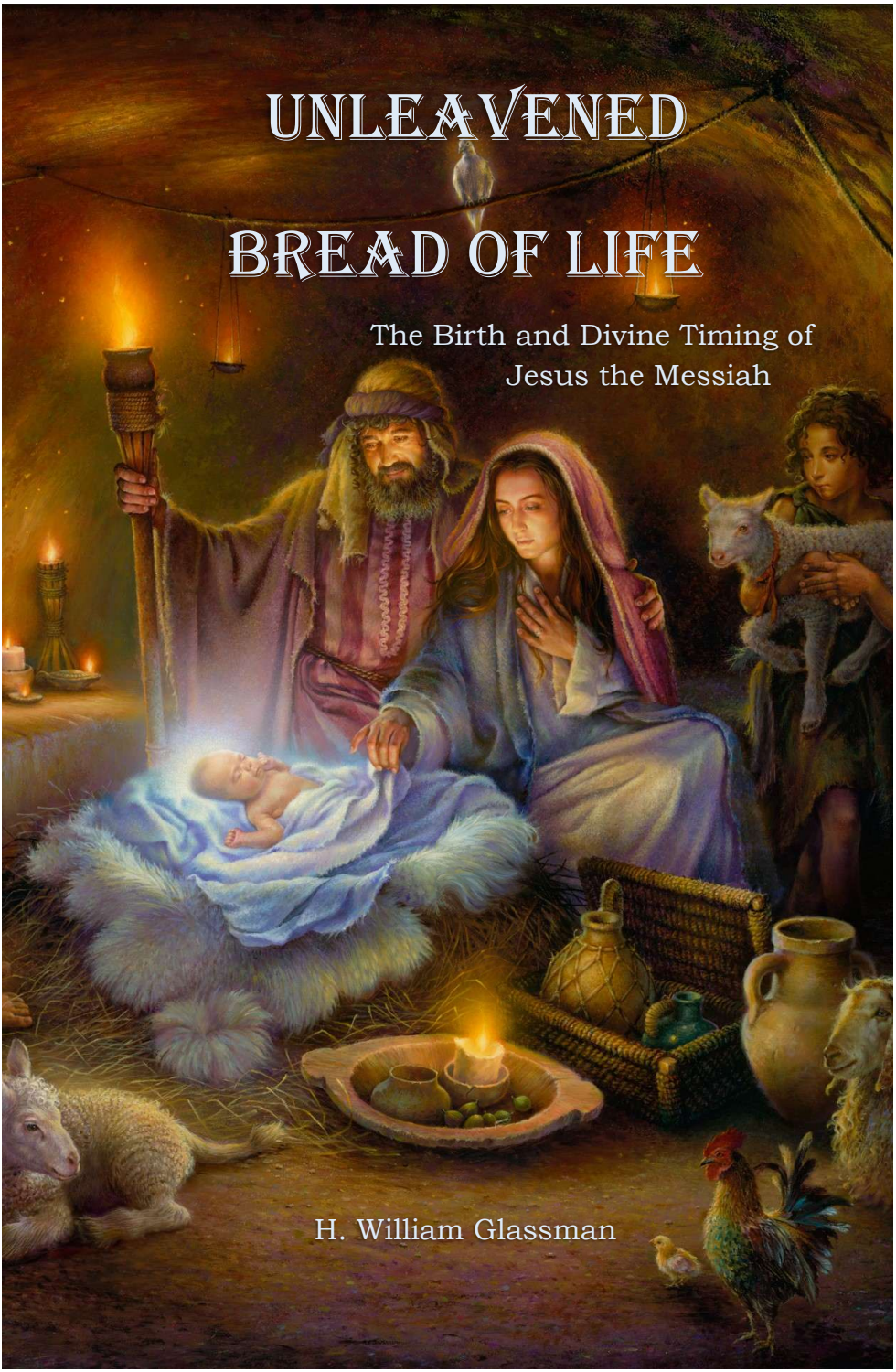
UNLEAVENED
BREAD OF LIFE
The Birth and Divine Timing of
Jesus the Messiah
H. William Glassman

UNLEAVENED BREAD OF LIFE

The Birth and Divine Timing of Jesus the Messiah

By
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About the Author

H. William Glassman (Bill) served alongside his wife Patty for 30 years in ministry, before retiring to care for family needs. His legacy includes being the son and grandson of pastors and the descendant of Rabbis.

Bill graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Oral Roberts University.

He and Patty were married in 1987 and have four children. They reside in Haskell Oklahoma. This book is Bill's second published work and is a companion to his third, the *Journey of Jesus the Messiah.* His first shorter work containing common sense advice for pastors and Christian leaders, *Saving America One Family at a Time* was published in 2017. Bill's books are available at: GethsemaneBooks.store.

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Contributing Author

Ronald David Glassman, Bill's older brother brought a God-given love for precision to the project. This skill was developed through years of experience in aviation maintenance and inspection as well as being an electrical engineer. In addition, David's love for, and study of, Astronomy proved invaluable as he plunged into the mystery of the Star of Bethlehem adding a significant contribution to the understanding of its identity.

Special Thanks to:

Mark Ira Bracken, who informed, and edited Roman coin material (OldSoldierCurrency.square.site)

Roy Hayden, PhD in Old Testament, who evaluated sections of this work related to the Old Testament

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John Rocchi, MD, internal medicine specialist, who evaluated medical issues related to the demise of Herod the Great

Ori White, JD, who evaluated legal arguments within this book

Daniel Worden, PhD in Clement of Alexandria, who evaluated information related to Clement of Alexandria

Soli Deo Gloria

Forward

I first met H. William Glassman in the early 1980's when he was an accounting major at Oral Roberts University. He had come up with an idea of sending students on mission trips and giving them academic credit for this as was done in other disciplines. I was appointed by the theology department to work with Bill and bring his idea to fruition. That project was a great success.

Now, years later, William has turned his attention to pursue a task that requires looking into various fields of study to try to solve a puzzle that has interested him for many years. With the same interest, scholarly ability, and tenacity he gave to the missions program, he carefully examines the available evidence and comes to conclusions where the facts have led him. He is aware that others have taken on this task, and he acknowledges the contribution they have made.

The approach used is non-threatening. He asks the reader to examine his conclusions and make their own decision as to whether he is right or not. Many fields are examined, some of them technical, but he presents them in a clear manner. His material is well footnoted, and suggestions are made for further study. Anyone who wishes may examine the sources themselves.

William Glassman served as a pastor for thirty years, and the lessons he learned in how to deal with people during that time, are evident throughout. He is not argumentative or boastful, but is loving and gracious in his approach. I have enjoyed reading this book and highly recommend it to you. It will open your eyes to new possibilities concerning the birthday of Jesus Christ. December 25 was certainly not that day.

Roy E. Hayden Ph.D.

Dr. Hayden earned his Ph.D. in Old Testament from Brandeis University and has been teaching in Christian colleges and seminaries since 1962. In addition to his teaching career, Dr. Hayden served as a lead translator for parts of the Old Testament of the New International Version of the Bible, 1978.

Preface

Jesus Christ said, “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed” (John 20:29). Scripture also says, “…without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Accepting the gospel message requires faith.

So what about the doubting Thomases among us? Jesus also said, “seek and ye shall find,” Matthew 7:7. He did not chastise Thomas for his doubts. He answered Thomas’ doubts with love and proof.

His questions answered, Thomas became one of the most daring of the disciples! He perhaps traveled the farthest of the apostles. It is believed, “St. Thomas preached in southern India, suffered martyrdom there, and was there first buried."[1] His work reached vast numbers of people for Christ.

God loves people who ask questions, Thomas was one of several apostles God used to pass along not only the teaching of Christ, but proof of Christ’s life and chronology. He used Thomas’ personality that valued proof to be instrumental in protecting one of the greatest proofs of Christ’s life and ministry, the Shroud of Turin.

Although it was sometimes distorted with time, buried, or forgotten, enough of the chronological record was preserved and transmitted to allow for the dating of the major events of Christ’s life and ministry to be rediscovered. This information is amazing, and its implications are truly powerful.

One of my life experiences has helped me to tie the information in this book together in my own mind. Perhaps it will help you as well. For a time, I had the challenging job of being a bank teller. One of my

responsibilities was to open the vault. To open the vault there were multiple combination locks, each with several numbers that had to be dialed in perfectly and in the correct sequence. Finally, a large bar handle had to be turned to unlock the vault. If any of the numbers were incorrect or out of sequence, or if the bar was not moved to the proper position, the door would not open. The only option was to start again. This book has been a similar effort. It lines up all the numbers in the correct combination making the bar ready to turn.

This journey has taken me where I did not plan or expect to go. I have been forced to abandon positions cherished from my youth. Yet gaining a better understanding of Scripture, learning from Christ's early followers, and studying scholars through the ages, God's grace has allowed me to rediscover the date of the birth of Christ. I have further come to identify the dates of major events of His life and ministry.

This journey has reinforced and clarified Scripture for me. I pray after reading this book and considering the evidence you will rejoice in the beauty revealed by the dates of the Lord's birth, death, and Resurrection. May you discover the treasures behind the vault door. I am grateful you have joined me on this journey of discovery!

***

I wish to credit Sir Colin J. Humphreys for defining a range of dates (April 13 – 27 of 5 B.C.) for the birth of Christ. The date I have rediscovered is within this range. His work, and that of Mark Kidger, on the Star of Bethlehem reignited the curiosity I had as a child and encouraged my journey to explore this topic.[2]

Introduction

Time and again I have been challenged in two ways. Some have said it was not possible to discern Christ's birthday. Others have said, "Who cares?" Here is my answer. First, ignorance does not recognize it is ignorant. Unless one is willing to study, he does not know what can be learned.

Second, we all should care when Jesus Christ was born! God demonstrated His love for you in the most powerful way anyone has ever shown love. He deserves our love. If you love someone you want to know everything you can about them. Jesus Christ matters, not just briefly like some fleeting cultural icon. He matters for eternity, as King of kings and Lord of lords. We should be hungry to learn all we can about Him. The nuggets of gold revealed in each chapter of this book illuminate His love and plan.

Another reason this information matters is truth. Some of my seminary professors repeatedly assaulted the Word of God by declaring "the Bible contains God's Word but is not God's Word." They added, "the cup that holds the coffee is not the coffee." These statements are a deception and a lie! Their falsehood meant one cannot trust all of Scripture. In their arrogance they shifted the authority from God's Word to the one who can decipher what part of Scripture is God's Word. Thus, they claimed the authority to themselves!

Only one Man is worthy to be trusted to decipher "truth" for us, the One who was and is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Only God and His Word are worthy of such trust. This book defends the accuracy of Scripture with facts. As I studied, many erroneous beliefs taught in seminaries and churches fell as God and His word stood true and accurate.

If you love God, if you want to know about Jesus Christ, or if you want to know the true history of His life and ministry, this book was written for you. This study changed my life; I believe it will change yours.

Understanding This Text

The material enclosed within boxes or parenthesis is Biblical, theological, or historical background related to, but not necessary for, the material being covered; or they are personal comments from this writer. They provide context. In addition, appendices have been prepared that provide greater depth and detail for the topics addressed.

I reject the "woke" folly of replacing the identification of the turning point in history from a Christ / God centered (B.C./A.D.) to the secular (BCE/CE). BCE/CE has no foundation in the start of an empire or ruler's reign, as all dating systems do. Other than the Church's position for Christ's birth held for over a millennia, there is no reason to use the year chosen as the transition point. Even non-believers should recognize Jesus is the most pivotal and important human to ever live. All of history, ethics, and culture shifted with His life and work. To replace B.C./A.D. with any other notation is of course offensive to Christians. Yet from a larger perspective, it is also offensive to many who understand history.

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List of Abbreviations

JJM *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*, H. William Glassman

RJM *Return of Jesus the Messiah*, H. William Glassman

SGW Strong's Greek Word – From *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, James Strong

SHW Strong's Hebrew Word – From *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, James Strong

Section I
Christ's Birth Recorded by the Early Church and in Luke's Gospel

This section will examine how the various parts of the Church arrived on the dates they celebrate the birth of Christ: December 25th, January 6th, and January 7th. More importantly, exploration will be made into the efforts to pass along the correct date of Christ's birth by the Apostle John and others through their disciples. That date is 7 Nisan in the Jewish calendar. It is the root of all the Church's current dates for the birth of Christ, although none of them are correct.

Next the Gospel of Luke will be studied because what he shared about Jesus Christ's chronology happened first: the birth of Jesus' cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist. Luke's Gospel highlights that John the Baptist's and Jesus Christ's ministries are intertwined.

Luke starts by recounting the angelic message foretelling John's birth to his father, Zacharias, during his week of service within the temple. By identifying the week the vision occurred, the birth date of John the Baptist will be identified and that in turn points toward Christ's birth. Because it is necessary to determine when Zacharias received his message, other chronological information will be explored: the timing of the work on Solomon's Temple and the start of the rotation of priestly service.

The history and timing of the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and why the couple picked the dates they did to travel will be considered. When the couple arrived in Bethlehem and why it was so crowded will be presented. The annual cycle of the shepherd's duties will be discussed. Then the amazing precision of Luke's identification of the start of the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ will be laid out.

Progressing through this book the dates of Christ's baptism, start of ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

will be revealed. Section II will be focused upon the Apostle Matthew's work to protect the birth information of Christ in his Gospel, as well as ways the Apostle Paul passed this information forward. The efforts of the Apostle John to pass along the chronology of Christ through his Gospel will be one of the focuses of section III of this book. The preservation of the testimony of the Resurrection existing in the Shroud of Turin, accomplished by the Apostle Thomas, will be explored in section IV of this book.

Why the Information in this Section Is Important

Forces of evil continually attempt to strip mankind of the hope found in Christ through a myriad of devices including ignorance. One method to keep mankind ignorant is to dissuade people from believing Christ even existed. Another is to suggest what has been recorded about Him cannot be trusted. His life and ministry were real and have been accurately dated. His message of salvation can be trusted.

Understanding the temple's history, the Jewish religious feasts, and the cultural history recorded in Scripture aids in understanding Christ's message. This knowledge stands against deception and the relentless attacks upon the veracity of God's Word. The information presented in this section and in this book is not new, but it is important and has been lost for too long.

Chapter 1
Christ's Birth Dated by the Early Church

The Church Cared about When Christ Was Born!

How the Western Church Arrived at December 25th for Christ's Birth Date

Why the Western Church Regards the Eastern Church as Celebrating Christ's Birth Date as January 7th

A Brief Overview of the Jewish Calendar and How Jews of the First Century Marked the Start of the Day

How the Church of Armenia Received the Misconstrued Date of January 6th for Christ's Birth

Attempts to Commemorate the Birthday of Christ

***

The Church Cared about When Christ Was Born!

All the apostles likely knew and cared about the date when Christ was born. Fortunately, there remains proof that several of them attempted to preserve the date and taught it to their disciples. This chapter will show that all three current dates embraced for the birth of Christ descend from the work of the apostles and the early Church fathers. These three dates: December 25th, January 7th, and January 6th will be examined in that order. They will all be traced back to the true date of Christ's birth, 7 *Nisan*. This book will also prove 5 B.C. was the year Jesus Christ was born.

***

How the Western Church Arrived at December 25th for Christ's Birth Date

Pope Telesphorus, who was martyred in Rome in A.D. 137 after serving for 11 years, passed on instructions to the Church to sing "*Gloria in excelsis deo"* etc., but only upon the night of the nativity."[1] His statement proves the Church knew Christ was born at night, they knew the specific night, and they knew the season of the year it occurred. The night of His birth was within the Passover season, as Telesphorus refers to this season as the "season of the nativity."[2] This determination can be made because the singing of *Gloria in excelsis deo* was only permitted to be sung during masses of the "Easter" season, a corrupted name for the Passover season, until the eleventh century.[3] This instruction by Telesphorus came less than 40 years after the death of the last apostle. Telesphorus' statement demonstrates the Church in Rome knew when Christ was born early in the second century. This information was almost certainly provided by the Apostles themselves.

Don't Insult Pope Telesphorus

The clear evidence of the Church's early knowledge of Christ's birth date stood in the way of the later enshrined position of a December 25th birth. Therefore, the writer of *The Book of the Popes* felt compelled to "correct" the record of Telesphorus' words by stating, "the Nativity was not fixed [assigned by the Church] until the fourth century."[4] How shockingly arrogant! No person or entity had authority to "fix the date." Either it was passed down directly, or indirectly through information that could be deduced, or the dating of Christ's birth is purely speculative. The December 25th dating of Christmas is contrived, although it was a distortion of the correct date, which is factual and was preserved.

The Apostles Peter and Paul both preached in Rome. It is safe to assume Peter knew Christ's birth date and passed it along as he was one of those closest to Jesus. Paul clearly knew this information as his disciples passed it along through a painting which will be discussed. There is also evidence that the Apostle John knew the date of Christ's birth. This conclusion is clear through examining the legacy of his disciples, which will be considered first.

John's spiritual descendants attempted to preserve the date of Christ's birth. Nevertheless, evidence shows that both day number and the year recognized as Christ's birth shifted. Ultimately, in the Western Church, the correct day of 7 *Nisan* morphed to December 25th. And the year Christ was born, which the current dating system marks as 5 B.C., was supplanted as Church leaders supported later and later years. Ultimately, sometime after the early fourth century A.D., the generally accepted year for Christ's birth became regarded as 1 B.C. Although in recent times the year widely considered to be the birth-year of Christ has shifted back to 3 or 4 B.C.

John the Beloved, Disciple of Jesus Christ

John was the disciple closest to Jesus Christ. He is also believed to have been the youngest disciple. He was the one who reclined on the chest of Christ next to Him as they ate the Last Supper. He wrote the Gospel that bears his name. Also, and very important to the topic, Mary the mother of Christ lived with John after Christ's Crucifixion, as recorded in John 19:26. The Gospel of John contains much chronological information, some of which must have been provided by Mary. John, knowing this information, passed it along both directly and implicitly. The chronological information John intentionally passes along, which this book will prove, includes the following:

> Christ was very likely conceived on 9 *Av* – the date in the Jewish calendar upon which both

the First Temple (Solomon's) and the Second Temple (Herod's) were burned. Logically, John understood the correlation, because he documented in his Gospel Jesus' words that point to His body being the "Temple" that would be raised in three days. This material is discussed in chapter 3.

Christ was born after dusk began 7 *Nisan*, but before midnight ended April 13th, of 5 B.C. The evidence is clear as his disciples identified 7 *Nisan* as the birth date of Christ, although the date later shifted to being regarded by some as His date of conception.

Christ was presented as Messiah by John the Baptist on 1 *Nisan*, the first day of the new year of the Jewish religious calendar, in A.D. 26. John's Gospel specifically lays out the information necessary to chart the days in Jesus' first weeks of ministry from the date of Christ's return from the wilderness. John's efforts demonstrate he knew this date was the fulfillment of the Daniel 9 Messianic prophecy and recorded it in his Gospel. This proof is examined in chapter 14.

Christ fulfilled the requirement of attendance in Jerusalem for the three major Jewish feasts each year of His ministry. This documentation would have been important to present the case to Jews that Jesus was a "good Jew." Otherwise, He would have been disqualified in their minds as being even a decent Rabbi, let alone the Messiah. The events of each of these seven visits, beginning and ending with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, are identified in *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*, written by this author.

Christ was crucified on Wednesday, 14 *Nisan*, April 28 in the year A.D. 28, after two years of public ministry. John's Gospel provides the documentation of the day of the week Christ was crucified. The date of Christ's Crucifixion, in conjunction with the other Gospels and secular sources, proves the year of Christ's death and Resurrection. This information will be proved in chapter 18.

Christ's Resurrection was after His third full day in the grave was completed, as 17 *Nisan* was ending at dusk, May 1st, A.D. 28; and the tomb was found empty on Sunday morning 18 *Nisan*, May 2nd. The Gospel narratives and their meaning in Greek will be examined in chapter 19.

Again, John knew all the facts just listed regarding Christ's life and ministry. John's understanding is clearly indicated in his Gospel. No doubt, he verbally passed the information down through his disciples.

Perhaps this outline will allow the following sections about each man to be more easily grasped.

John understood that Jesus was born 7 *Nisan* in 5 B.C. He taught Polycarp.

Polycarp no doubt understood John's teachings as he defended them. He taught Irenaeus.

Irenaeus taught a 7 *Nisan* birth, in "about" Augustus 41st year, by the calendar in Rome which started the year January 1 – or "about" 4 B.C. He taught Hippolytus.

Hippolytus taught a 7 *Nisan* birth, although the year he taught **seems to be** firmly 4 B.C. This fact can be understood since he never speaks of his teacher

Irenaeus' 2-year ministry of Christ while holding to the same year of Crucifixion. Thus, as some scholars suggest, it appears he taught a one-year ministry of Christ. His 4 B.C. would have been per the Roman calendar where he lived in Rome. He interacted with and influenced Origen and Africanus.

Origen taught that Christ was born **in** 4 B.C. probably per the Roman calendar. It is quite possible he is one conduit of the 7 *Nisan* birth of Christ from Hippolytus to his friend Africanus.

Africanus taught that Christ was born **in** Augustus' 41st year **based upon Egyptian dating** which would have begun August 29th of 3 B.C. This belief allowed him to embrace a vernal equinox (March 21, 3 B.C.) conception of Christ, which was 7 *Nisan* in 3 B.C.

Endnotes that support this information are attached within the sections below.

Irenaeus

John the Beloved taught Polycarp. Polycarp taught Irenaeus. Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130 – c. 202) was born in Smyrna, Turkey and pastored in Lyon, France. He cared very much about protecting Christ's birth chronology. Using his great influence, Irenaeus stepped in and prevented Pope Victor from abolishing the Eastern Church's Passion Week customs rooted in the Jewish timing of events. This information is discussed in chapter 17.

Yet because of, or as reflected through, Irenaeus' writing in *Against Heresies III, 21, 3*, the birth-year migrated from 5 B.C. to "about" 4 B.C. This position is reflected as he asserted, "…for our Lord was born about the forty-first year of the reign of Augustus…" Augustus' 41st year was 4

B.C. by the Roman calendar in one dating method, or as late as a 12-month period beginning August 29, 3 B.C. in the Egyptian region of the empire.[5]

In another sense one could ask, "What does 'about' mean?" Does it mean approximately a year before or after, or does it mean just before the 41st year began? The knowledge of the year of Christ's birth had already become fuzzy in just the third generation from the apostles. The correct year of His birth had already been warped from 5 B.C. to "about" 4 B.C.

Hippolytus and his friend Origen

Irenaeus taught Hippolytus of Rome (c. A.D. 170 - c. 235). Hippolytus was a courageous leader who fought the centralization of power in the church under the popes. Some claim he was the first, or among the first, to support December 25th as the birth date of Christ.[6] Hippolytus' position on the birth date of Christ is very debatable as will be shown. Yet it is almost impossible Hippolytus supported this erroneous date. Since this man fought the centralization of power within the church, it is ironic his reputation would be used after his death to promote a date church leadership had decided to force upon the Church.

Others have proposed that Theophilus, Bishop of Caesarea, the mentor of Clement of Alexandria, was the first to suggest December 25th as the birth date of Christ.[7] This theory makes no sense since Clement of Alexandria did not support Christ being born on December 25th.

Whoever contrived December 25th as the birth date of Christ almost certainly did so through distortions of the position of Africanus. Both the date he proposed was altered and what he said happened on that date was changed, as will be examined.

Yet there is a trail that strongly implies Hippolytus knew the birthdate of Christ, whether it descended to Him from John the Beloved, through his mentor Irenaeus, or through the teaching of Peter or Paul. One indication would be the incorrect April 2nd date ascribed to him. April 2nd was 7 *Nisan* in 1 B.C. While it will be shown, April 2nd was affixed to Hippolytus, what seems clear is Hippolytus actually passed along the 7 *Nisan* dating and attempted to pass on the birth year of Christ to his younger peers.

Interestingly, since there is no solid indication Hippolytus taught that Christ had a ministry longer than one year,[8] it can be postulated he considered Christ's birth one year later than Irenaeus while maintaining the same year of Crucifixion passed on to him. Such a position would explain Origen's early belief in a one-year ministry of Christ before shifting to a ministry of two full and one partial years of ministry. The topic of Christ's length of ministry is discussed in a later chapter.

Hippolytus had direct contact with Origen (c. A.D. 184 – c. 253). Origen attended a lecture by Hippolytus in Rome and was publicly recognized by this respected teacher at the event.[9] Their relationship seems to have gone beyond this one encounter as Origen defended a section of Hippolytus' Daniel commentary in a debate via correspondence with Africanus. Origen also defended, with a wording modification, the dating of the year of birth taught by Irenaeus, which could have come to him through Hippolytus.

While it is arguable Hippolytus may have moved the year of Christ's birth forward from Irenaeus' position, Origen clearly propagated the move from Irenaeus' position of Christ's birth in "**about**" the 41st year of Augustus" to "**in** the 41st year of Augustus.[10] It can be deduced, Hippolytus as well as Origen supported 7 *Nisan* as the birthday of Christ. This conclusion can be reached through its appearance in the position of Origen's friend Africanus.

Origen's friendship with Africanus most likely stems from their teaching at the same time, and perhaps the same school, in Alexandria. Beyond Africanus' familiarity with at least some of Hippolytus' writings and his indirect contact with him through Origen, history records Africanus visiting Rome between A.D. 201 and A.D. 222.[11] During Africanus' stay in Rome it would have been logical for him to seek out Hippolytus. To not pay at least a courtesy visit could have been perceived as rude. Since Africanus' particular interest was in chronology, it would seem natural a discussion on the matter would have taken place.

Whether through direct contact, or indirect communication, perhaps through Origen, it appears Hippolytus passed the 7 *Nisan* birth date to Africanus. This conclusion can be drawn from Africanus pointing to 7 *Nisan* as the beginning of Christ's life on Earth (although Africanus asserted it was Jesus' conception date not His birth date). Africanus' position will be examined shortly.

It is unfortunate Hippolytus' name is attached to two incorrect dates for the birth of Christ: December 25th and April 2nd. Nevertheless, it must be noted, April 2nd was a final grand attempt to pass along 7 *Nisan* as the birth date of Christ. The April 2nd date for the birth of Christ appears as a sidebar addition carved into the base of the Hippolytus statue and it also appears in one early, and still existent, copy of Hippolytus' Daniel 9 commentary. Based on the highly respected dating of Parker and Duberstein, April 2nd was 7 *Nisan* of 1 B.C. This date was a late addition to the discussion of Christ's birth date as the year of birth migrated forward in time. April 2nd apparently never took deep root. Nevertheless, the April 2nd date confirms the 7 *Nisan* date of Christ's birth existed and was supported into at least the third or fourth centuries. This date along with the error of attaching December 25th to Hippolytus is discussed in the appendix, "**Christmas Dates Errantly Attached to Hippolytus**."

Sextus Julius Africanus and the Vernal Equinox

As stated, Irenaeus recorded Christ was born, "**about** the 41st year of Augustus" [4 B.C.]. Perhaps Hippolytus or another person using the Roman calendar and leaning upon 7 *Nisan* as Christ's birth date, informed Origen. Again, Origen stated Christ had been born **in** the 41st year of Augustus [4 B.C.]. Again, Irenaeus' approximation of "about" can be understood to mean earlier, rather than the more limiting "in." Whether intentional or not, it appears the date had been moved later in time as one generation passed the information on to the next.

Although it is likely Hippolytus ultimately provided the information directly to Sextus Julius Africanus, Origen may have been the first conduit of the birth date, 7 *Nisan*, to Africanus. Africanus then made two "adjustments" to the information. First, he placed Christ's birth in the 41st year of Augustus **by the Egyptian calendar** where he taught. This was the same wording used by Origen, but it shifted the date forward. Jack Finegan, a highly respected chronologist, suggests Africanus regarded the 41st year of Augustus as a 12-month period based upon the Egyptian calendar beginning August 29th of 3 B.C.[12] Therefore, Africanus' teaching moved the birth of Christ later in time. He implied Christ's birth was in December of 3 B.C. as he focused attention on Christ's conception being supposedly on the prior vernal equinox 9 months earlier.[13]

Africanus wrote *Chronographiai*, a chronology that extended from his dating of creation forward to A.D. 221.[14] Through a mischaracterization of Africanus' position in his *Chronographiai*, it has been claimed he dates the conception of Christ to March 25th.[15] To understand what transpired, this English translation of Africanus' words in his work "Chronology 1" must be understood.

> ... the number of 5500 years as the period up to the advent of the Word of salvation, that was announced to the world in the time of the sway of the Caesars.[16]

The "Word of salvation" would be a nod to John's Gospel identifying Christ as the "Word" that became flesh. Jesus' Hebrew name meant "salvation." The phrase "was announced to the world" is reference not to Christ's birth but the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that He would be miraculously conceived within her.

The marking of the date is done through Africanus' statement: "the number of 5500 years as the period **up to.**" The statement means the year 5500 in Africanus' chronology was just completed at the point the announcement occurred. In his chronology, years were completed on the last day before the vernal equinox. Africanus was marking years on two assumptions: creation began with the first vernal equinox and Christ's conception occurred during a vernal equinox as well. The vernal equinox Africanus suggested for Christ's conception was in the spring of 3 B.C.

Africanus did not use the name of any month or any date within the month in his statement. Others helped themselves to attach the name of months, and dates within those months. The first time a month and a date were attached to Africanus' statement was likely in Alexandria, the city where Africanus worked and resided. The vernal equinox in Alexandria would have been expressed as the 25th day of *Phamenoth*.[17] *Phamenoth* was roughly equivalent to the Julian calendar month of March. The correct transfer from the Egyptian date of *Phamenoth* 25 to the Julian calendar was the date March 21st, which was the correct date of the vernal equinox as it was identified in Alexandria, the lead city of the study of astronomy within the Roman empire.[18]

As Africanus' date for the vernal equinox conception of Jesus moved to Roman understanding, it was altered. It became identified as March 25th. This change is understandable both as a transposition error and it was a recognizable date. March 25th was the ancient date the

Romans had previously accepted from the Greeks for the vernal equinox.[19]

Accepting the erroneous date of March 25th as Africanus' date for conception, others moved forward nine months to the ancient date of the winter solstice, December 25th, and declared it to be Christ's birth date. This date was insinuated into the writing of Clement of Alexandria and soon became widely accepted within the Church. However, and much more important than how Africanus was misinterpreted, it must be understood why Africanus selected the vernal equinox date for Christ's conception.

Perhaps Africanus adopted a common sentiment that creation began on the vernal equinox and attached Christ's conception to that point. More likely, however, it was Africanus' chronology that made common the position creation began and Christ was conceived on the vernal equinox. It also seems clear he chose this point for Christ's conception first and then projected from that point back to creation. Notice the conception of Christ is discussed in his "Chronology 1" not a later chapter in his work.

But one might ask, "Why did Africanus select the vernal equinox of 3 B.C. instead of Origen's or Hippolytus' 4 B.C.?" The answer is found in looking at the Jewish calendar day Africanus determined was when Christ's conception occurred. Again, the date of the vernal equinox for 3 B.C. was *Phamenoth* 25 (March 21st) by the Alexandrian understanding. The vernal equinox was March 25th by the ancient Greek understanding still embraced in Rome. Yet most importantly to Africanus, the vernal equinox was 7 *Nisan* that year in the Jewish calendar![20]

Africanus had accepted the day, 7 *Nisan*, taught within the Church in Rome. However, he migrated the date forward to the year he believed must have been correct based upon the Jewish date. Despite the efforts of

Africanus and those who passed it forward to him, the correct day for the birth of Christ, 7 *Nisan*, was lost with time.

Africanus' date based upon the cycle of the Sun was appealing to the masses due to cultural reasons associated with pagan festivals. His work allowed for the convenient replacement of pagan celebrations with the sacred event of Christ's coming to Earth. This fact was useful to the Church. Therefore, the "March 25th" and "December 25th" dates attributed to him became affixed to the dogma of the Church and the hearts of the people.

There are several instances from sermons and a calendar reference that show December 25th was widely accepted by the Western Church during the fourth century. There is also documentation from that century proving at least part of the Eastern Church rejected attempts by the Western Church to move them from January 6th, the date they regarded as Christ's birth date, to accept December 25th as the birth date of Christ. There is more information on this topic in the appendix, "**Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas.**"

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Why the Western Church Regards the Eastern Church as Celebrating Christ's Birth Date as January 7th [21]

The majority of the Eastern Church eventually accepted the December 25th date for Christmas. Yet with the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 a split occurred among those celebrating December 25th as the birthday of Christ. Both those who adopted the new Gregorian calendar and those who held onto the Julian calendar still considered, and continue to consider, the date they celebrate Christmas as December 25th.

Those Eastern countries maintaining their Julian

calendars did not join their Western brothers in moving their Christmas celebration. Rather, they shifted in relationship to them as they stayed consistent with the calendar in use in their countries.

When the Gregorian calendar was implemented in the West on October 4th, 1582, the next day was October 15th. The ten-day shift meant the Western believers regarded those in the East as celebrating their next Christmas on January 4th of 1583. This number of days were added to attempt to make the calendar adjust to what would have been "correct" in the year of the Counsel of Nicaea A.D. 325. That was the year the church "made everything correct." (The year they purged Jewish calendar influence from the Church – thus discarding the correct chronology of the life and ministry of Christ which was attached to the Jewish feasts!)

The Eastern Churches, who clung to their Julian calendars, regarded their date of Christmas as December 25, 1582. In 1700 the Gregorian calendar inserted a century leap day. This shift meant the date Christ's birth was recognized by the majority of the Eastern Church was then regarded in the West as January 5th. From the perspective of the West, in 1800 the Eastern date moved forward to January 6th. In 1900 it became, from the Western perspective, January 7th. In 2100 the Eastern Church that still uses the Julian calendar will then be regarded in the West as celebrating Christmas on January 8th until 2200, when the date will shift again.

Theoretical Gregorian dates were not assigned to events prior to when the new calendar was placed into effect. For those interested, a conversion table is available in: Nautical Almanac Offices of the United Kingdom and United States (1961), Explanatory Supplement of the Astronomical Ephemeris, pages 416-418.

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A Brief Overview of the Jewish Calendar and How Jews of the First Century Marked the Start of the Day

This brief explanation may aid in understanding dates and timing which will be helpful in discussing the Armenian dating of Christmas. For those who want more detail, the appendix "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**" provides great detail regarding the subjects of daily timing and calendars used during the time of Christ's ministry on Earth.

The Jews had, and have, both a secular/political calendar and a religious calendar. The political calendar since before the time of Christ began in the fall with the month *Tishrei*. The parallel religious calendar began and begins in the spring starting with *Nisan* (also spelled *Nissan*) in either March or April each year. The reason it shifts between two Julian/Gregorian months is because the Jewish calendar is lunar and normally contains 354 days as opposed to the Julian and Gregorian calendar's 365 with added leap days.

Both the civil and religious calendars of the Jews fall behind solar calendars roughly 11 days each year. Then, an extra month (intercalation month) is added to the lunar calendars to catch up 7 times during a 19-year span. This shift means one year's 1 *Nisan* may have been in April and the next year it may be in March.

Some have suggested the ancient Jews may have used sunrise as the start of the 24-hour day, 12-hours behind the Pharisees evening start of the day, further suggesting the Sadducees maintained this custom until their demise as a group after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.[22] Nevertheless, certainly the Pharisees, the largest Jewish religious sect, regarded the start of a new 24-hour day as beginning at sunset or dusk, approximately 6 p.m. in the evening.[23] This sunset to sunset day certainly was followed by at least the majority of Jews during the time of Christ's ministry and it was used for recording time in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The third largest sect of Judaism, the Essenes, as well as the Romans, used midnight to mark the start of the 24-hour day as almost everyone does today.[24] The timing of the day for the Egyptians is also important to the material in this chapter. The Egyptians almost certainly started their day from midnight as recorded by Pliny the Elder,[25] although some have suggested they counted from sunrise.[26] John's Gospel marks the start of the day from midnight (see appendix, "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**").

All three of the Synoptic Gospels add the wrinkle of recognizing the start of the 12-hour daylight period in the morning, from approximately 6 a.m., as was the custom of the common Jewish people. They marked the daylight period and the night with their own hourly counting. For example, the third hour happens twice each day, once three hours after dusk and again three hours after dawn. It is easy to understand how the time of an event or its date could be confused in conversations between gentiles and Jews, or even between the Jews themselves.

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How the Church of Armenia Received the Misconstrued Date of January 6th for Christ's Birth

As will be shown, it seems clear Clement of Alexandria was the conduit through whom a January 6th birth date of Christ reached Armenia. Two distortions occurred before Clement settled upon this date and disseminated it.

Christ was born after dusk started 7 *Nisan*, the seventh day of the first month of Jewish religious calendar. As shown, the church attempted to preserve this information. Nevertheless, it is understandable how the knowledge could become garbled as it crossed from one culture and daily time-keeping system to another and from one calendar to another.

The first distortion was the date. It shifted from the 7th to the 6th. There are several ways Christ's evening birth on the 7th could have been changed to the 6th in the minds of people. Clement of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 150 – c. 240) grew up in Israel and would have understood the differences of the recognition of a new day. He may have received the birth information from someone who regarded the day as something other than Pharisaic timing. Or while he lived in Israel, he may have had his own prejudice that moved the information to a day-timing he accepted. Or perhaps, the distorted day information may have been passed to Clement of Alexandria while he resided in Egypt. Yet the most likely cause of the date shift seems to be that Clement was trying to communicate when Christ was born within Egypt and probably took the evening birth information and transposed it to the Egyptian understanding of the day. In their system it was still the 6th when Christ was born.

The second distortion from the Hebrew month *Nisan* to the Julian month January would not have originated in Israel, because "first month" would not have been misconstrued to January there. People living in Israel, which was within the Syrian province, would have used either the Macedonian names of the month as seen in the writings of historian Josephus (e.g. Wars of the Jews 6, 10, 1), or the Hebrew month names. It would have been very uncommon for someone to refer to the month name "January" at all, and they certainly would not regard it there as the first month of the year based upon either Jewish custom or the calendar in general use by other people living in the Syrian region, which began the year in the fall.

However, when the information "first month of the year" moved into Egypt, *Nisan* could easily have been misconstrued as January. Egypt had been influenced by the Roman calendar system since 22 B.C.[27] Further, intellectuals in Alexandria and Rome had regular communication. If one was accustomed to using a Julian calendar or was communicating to a Roman audience, it

would have been easy to distort *Nisan*, "the first month" of the Jewish calendar, to January, "the first month" of the Julian calendar.

Clement of Alexandria was a teacher in Egypt when he wrote *Stromata*, 1, 21 where he recorded his understanding of the birth of Christ:

> From the birth of Christ, therefore, to the death of Commodus are, in all, a hundred and ninety-four years, one month, thirteen days.

Clement's use of the death of a caesar to identify an important event, such as the birth of Christ, was common in Roman culture. He was obviously targeting a Roman audience. As will be explained, Clement's words identify January 6th of 2 B.C. as Christ's birth date. (Notice the shifting of the year forward again.)

It appears the January 6th dating of Clement then migrated to Jerusalem after he codified the distortion. It seems an altered copy of Clement's *Stromata* accounts for the joining of Christ's incorrect birth date with an incorrect date of His baptism that were celebrated together in Jerusalem in the 3rd century A.D. For more information on Clement's dating, see the appendix entitled, "**Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas.**"

While the Western Church recognizes December 25th as the birthday of Christ and most of the Eastern Church celebrates January 7th, the Armenian Orthodox Church celebrates January 6th as His birthday. Indeed, the January 6th date documented in the writings of Clement of Alexandria was almost certainly the source for the Armenian Orthodox Church's position.

A January 6th birth date was both accepted in Armenia for centuries and stridently opposed by the Western Church

before Ananias of Shirak (A.D. c. 600 – 670) reasserted and finally codified the Armenian January 6th dating of the birth of Christ.[28] (Shirak is a city in northwest Armenia.) Ananias documented what remains the official position of the Armenian Church through the production of a religious calendar for his country. He stated that he formed this calendar from dating obtained from **Alexandria** (The city of Clement the chronologist and theologian). The history of the Armenian Church's struggle to maintain and defend its dating for the birthday of Christ is documented in the appendix entitled, "**Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas.**"

Many would disagree with the statement that Clement taught Christ was born on January 6th. The confusion arises from two reasons. First, the way he wrote the date demands decoding. Second, errant dates have been "put into his mouth."

Although Clement's dating quoted earlier might look odd today, during his time it was common practice to date events by the beginning or ending of the reign of officials. Emperor Commodus was assassinated on December 31, A.D. 192. The date of his death would have been well known, well recorded, and recent to Clement's writing. It was the perfect date of reference to use.

Using the Roman calendar and calculating back in time from Commodus' death, one arrives at the date of November 18, 3 B.C.[29] Before spending much effort analyzing if that might be Christ's birth date, it is not. Egypt used an annual calendar of exactly 365 days. Therefore, their calendar was off by ¼ day each year from the Julian calendar the Romans used. Adjusting to the number of days Clement was counting backward ([194 years x 365 days/year] + [1 month x 30 days/month] + 13 days = 70,853 days) one arrives at January 6, 2 B.C. (or January 7th if a partial leap day is rounded incorrectly).[30]

Further clouding the issue of Clement's dating for the birth of Christ are the insertions made to his work *Stromata* 1, 21 by later scribes. Clement spends a large paragraph setting down the dating of Roman History in a very definite and precise fashion marking from the deaths of caesars. He then spends the next paragraph establishing the exact date of Christ's birth, the length of His ministry, and the year of His Crucifixion through the same method from the death of Emperor Commodus.

After this point in the text, impostors, pretending to be Clement, made several dating statements. These scribal insertions no doubt happened after Clement's death and one can speculate would have been greatly offensive to him. The insertions are not even in the same writing style used by Clement. Clement was definitive and fixed events to the deaths of caesars and did not attach the events to any particular month or day. The interloping scribes did the opposite. They affixed specific months and days to the events, sometimes attaching a year, and stated the inserted dating information as though Clement was speculating. For those interested in analysis of the scribal insertions to the record of Clement of Alexandria, again see the appendix**: "Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas."**

Some may ask, "Why would the believers, in Israel especially, correctly remember the timing of Passion Week and the death of Christ but forget Christ's birthday so scholars would need to speculate about its date?" The answer has two parts. First, the date of Christ's birth **was** known and protected, as has been shown. Second, the possibility His birthday might not have been widely known could be explained by the Jews' low regard for birthdays.

Birth represented potential. Death represented completion. Jewish culture recognizes completed achievements, not potential.[31] To celebrate potential would have been regarded as arrogance to a Jew of the period,

and to many today. It is very probable only those closest to Christ would have known His birth date. Some definitely taught it to their disciples, possibly also providing it to interested parties. Yet it would not be normal or respectable to volunteer a birthday to a Jew.

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Attempts to Commemorate the Birthday of Christ

Knowing the correct date of Christ's birth allows for the understanding of how the events of Chrit's life fulfill foreshadowing religious activities prescribed in the Old Testament. These will be examined in the chapter, "Evaluating the Dating and Their Theological Implications." Yet there is no wrong date to celebrate Christ's birth. The issue is not so much the date as it is in the gratitude and love expressed in the celebration. Those who worship God must do so in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). Based upon this verse, humble faith in and sincere love for Jesus Christ are acceptable offerings of worship - regardless of the date.

Please consider the love and devotion of saints who had unknowingly lost the correct date for the Savior's birth but not their love for the Savior. The following story is perhaps the first and most dramatic demonstration of the Western Church's commitment to both Christ and to the December 25th date as His birth. There may be no better proof of commitment to Jesus Christ. It is easy to envision that Christ welcomed these believers into heaven with a loving embrace, regardless of when they celebrated His birth. This testimony should inspire humility in recognition that others who may have incorrect or incomplete information can still possess a faith in, and commitment to, the Lord worthy of great respect.

This event proves that by the start of the fourth century, December 25th had become the accepted date for Christ's

birth by the majority of the Western Church. This event, which occurred between A.D. 300 – 302, is recorded by Nicephorus as he documents the barbarism of Emperor Diocletian and the bravery of the believers:

> At Nicomedia (a city of Bithynia) when the festival of Christ's birth-day came, and a multitude of Christians in all ages had assembled together in the temple to celebrate that birth-day, Diocletian the tyrant, having gotten an advantageous occasion whereby he might accomplish his madness and fury, sent men thither to enclose the temple, and to set it on fire round about, and so consumed them all to ashes, even twenty thousand persons.[32]

This record is part of a listing honoring martyrs of the faith. It is noted in the record that all those entrapped with Anthimus, the Bishop of Nicomedia, were offered escape if they would but sacrifice to *lupiter victor* (Jupiter). None, not even the children, accepted the offer and instead they "willingly receiv'd (sic) the crown of martyrdom."[33] Note, the Eastern Church says the event took place on December 28th while the Western Church stands by the ancient *Martyrology of Rome* that states it occurred on December 25th.[34]

It is disappointing the birth date of Christ was lost for so long when servants of God tried very hard to protect it. Yet it was not completely lost! Their efforts provided enough markings along the trail to lead to the treasure of knowing the birthday of Christ. The chapters ahead contain so much more! By confirming the date and proving the year of Christ's birth, the richness contained in many passages of Scripture is discovered.

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Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter demonstrated how the Western Church's Christmas dating of December 25th as well as the Eastern Church's Christmas dating of January 6th and 7th can all be traced back to the Jewish calendar date 7 *Nisan*. It showed that some church fathers struggled to protect the 7 *Nisan* date of Christ's birth. This chapter also showed that teaching of the Church regarding the year of Christ's birth migrated forward in time.

Chapter 2
God's Plan Begins to Unfold with the Prophecy of John the Baptist's Birth (Luke 1:5-25)

Dating the Reign of Herod the Great

The Timing of the Service of Zacharias' Course

The Week Zacharias Received God's Message

When Elizabeth Conceived John the Baptist

***

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, ... (Luke 1:5a)

Dating the Reign of Herod the Great

The Scriptural accounts of Christ's birth begin with the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist during the reign of Herod the Great. However, the date of Herod's reign only provides a limitation for how late Christ could have been born as his reign began long before Christ was born. Herod the Great's reign began when he was appointed to rule over Galilee by Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) with senatorial confirmation during the week of September 19 - 26 of 40 B.C. Three years later his territory was expanded to include Jerusalem and Judea. He then ruled until his death on November 26, 4 B.C. Proof of this information is provided in the appendix of this book entitled, "**Herod the Great's Years of Reign and Date of Death.**"

The death of Herod the Great puts a solid end date on when Christ could have been born. In addition, because of his failing health, it is unimaginable he could have received the magi's visit following the birth of Christ during the last two weeks of his life. Before his death,

Herod was staying in Jericho receiving treatment for his terrible illness.

Even before his final weeks, Herod's symptoms would have made travel to Jerusalem, where he met the magi, excruciating during the last two months of his life. These facts mean Jesus could not have been born beyond the summer of 4 B.C. Here is one doctor's summary of his medical issues: "Herod died after an extended illness...His maladies as described by Josephus included a fire that 'glowed in him slowly,' ulcerated entrails, colitis, and convulsions."[1]

For many years, scholars have correctly held Herod's death to be in late 4 B.C., although it is a minority position. To allay any concerns, this book proves when Christ was born without any reliance upon Herod the Great's date of death. His death actually occurred more than a year after the magi's visit. In-depth analysis will not be provided here. Yet for avid historians and those who are curious for more information about Herod the Great's illness or date of death, details are available in the appendix mentioned earlier.

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... there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5b)

The Timing of the Service of Zacharias' Course

Luke 1:5 points to another clue to the timing of the birth of John the Baptist, and therefore the birth of Jesus Christ – the timing of Zacharias' service in the Temple. His time of service was based upon his being part of the division of Abijah or more correctly "Abia." The family of Abia was not one of the four who returned from Babylon.

The division name of Abia was assigned to a group of priests to preserve the original name.[2] To avoid confusion, this text will henceforth use the form "Abijah" as it is commonly translated.

The priests who served in the Temple were divided into 24 groups called divisions or courses. These courses served on a rotating basis, following in a numeric succession determined by the number assigned to each group by lot. The Abijah division was the eighth course (I Chronicles 24:10). Each division served from noon on one weekly Sabbath to noon on the next weekly Sabbath (II Chronicles 23:8).[3]

A full rotation of the 24 courses took 168 days (I Chronicles 24:5-19).[4] It is true, during the three great feasts all the divisions were present in Jerusalem as Scripture demanded. The additional priests helped with some of the services. Nevertheless, their assistance did not void or infringe upon the specific responsibilities of the course whose turn it was in the regular rotation of the orders, nor did the feasts alter the rotation of the courses themselves.[5]

Fortunately, there is verification of the uninterrupted 168-day cycle of the priests that continued from year to year through a discovery in the Dead Sea scrolls. Scrolls found in Qumran Cave 4 record how the 24 courses had a full 13 rotations during a six-year period using the ancient 364-day priestly calendar.[6] The events leading to the birth of John the Baptist started during one of these weeks of service. Again, identifying the schedule of the rotation of weeks, and specifically the week and year Zacharias received his visit, is crucial to the dating of John the Baptist's birth which supports the dating of Christ's birth.

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They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. (Luke 1:6-9)

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The Week Zacharias Received God's Message

Luke 1:9 states that Zacharias was chosen for a very special duty during one of his weeks of service. He was selected to go into the Temple to burn incense. This privilege only happened to very fortunate priests once in a lifetime. His service was during the week of his course's work based upon the priestly rotation.

The order of the service of the courses had been interrupted with the Babylonian captivity and the three-year assault on the Jew's religious liberties by Antiochus Epiphanes. Both these events occurred before the birth of John the Baptist. Yet they did not affect the progression of the priestly courses. Concerning the restoration after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra records that the divisions of the priests and orders of the Levites were restored "as it is written in the book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18). This verse means that when the Jews were allowed to return to Israel the sequence was returned to where it would have been if uninterrupted.

Second, the Jews again restored the old order after the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple from Antiochus (164 B.C.).[7] On the week of their resumption of duties, it would not have been difficult to restore the service of the priests

within the Temple in their course order as though uninterrupted.[8]

Luke 1:8 contains the Greek word *taxis* (SGW #5010), that is translated in the New American Standard Bible as "appointed order." It can also be translated as "regular arrangement" or "fixed succession." The Gospel writer seems intent to highlight that the service of the priests was in its proper order and at its proper time during the events leading up to the miraculous births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Luke is intentionally providing a clue to the timing of their births. If this is not the case, pointing out Zacharias' order was serving in its "regular arrangement" or "fixed succession" is quite extraneous.

Numerous theories have been developed to attempt to pin down when Zacharias' service would have occurred. Some have said sufficient information does not exist to establish the timing of the courses of service.[9] Yet in addition to the Dead Sea Scrolls providing testament of the 6-year 13-rotation cycle of the priestly order, chronological analysis developed by scholars including Edwin R. Thiele and Scripture itself made the determination of when Zacharias' service occurred possible. This determination could be made by identifying when the rotation of the divisions began. The Sabbath after the two-week period when the first Temple was dedicated was the day the rotation began.

While it is true there is a wide range of theories and dates regarding when the first Temple was dedicated, the information contained in Thiele's work, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, contains the vital clues.[10] Zacharias' message would have been received during his week of service, January 9-16, 6 B.C. The appendix entitled "**The Timing of the Divisions of the Priests**", explains several theories of when the courses of the priests began and the deficiency of each theory. The appendix then explains the correct timing based upon Thiele's work. It is truly astounding to consider the 1000-

year span of time the rotation of the divisions of the priests continued. It is also amazing how God gave the time marker needed to prove when the rotation began through an astrological sign that can be verified today! This sign is documented in the appendix just mentioned.

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And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear gripped him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb.

And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN [Malachi 4:6]*, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in the proper time."

The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home. After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant; and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men." (Luke 1:10-25)

When Elizabeth Conceived John the Baptist

Scripture says that before John the Baptist was born, his father Zacharias was visited by the angel Gabriel who told him of the coming miraculous birth of his son. The birth would be a miracle because his father and his mother, Elizabeth, were advanced in years. His name was to be *Jehochanan* or *Jochanan* which means the "Lord is gracious."[11]

Scripture does not document the specific day during Zacharias' week of service he received God's message. Nevertheless, Luke 1:23 records he did not leave Jerusalem until the completion of his division's weekly service. This service would have been completed at noon on January 16, 6 B.C.

Despite his age, he was able to make the trip to the Temple and back, or he would not have been one of the priests serving from his division. Those unable to travel were permitted to stay behind to fast and pray.[12] Since there were rules about how far one could go on a Sabbath, he could have started his walk, or donkey ride, home only shortly before the Sabbath ended at dusk. Then he was free to go without concern about his distance of travel.

Zacharias lived in the hill country of Judea, an area extending some 4 to 14 miles away from Jerusalem (Luke 1:39). According to Theodosius' writing, from A.D. 530, Zacharias and Elizabeth lived five miles away from Jerusalem.[13] Scholars have identified this village as Ein Karem (Ain Karim or Ein Kerem).[14] Beginning his walk shortly before dusk, he likely arrived home as it became dark. One can assume he was anxious to get home. He had a story to tell... or rather, to describe through motions and writing since he could not talk (Luke 1:19-22).

It is reasonable to believe the beginning of the miracle of the birth of John the Baptist would have been the start of an ovulation cycle, which begins with the clearing out of old dead cells during menstruation. Being kind, God would have waited until Elizabeth was informed and submitted herself to His plan before anything happened in her body. She would not have menstruated for many years when God began the miracle within her body. If she had not already been made aware of God's plan, this bleeding would have produced fear or even panic as it would have been perceived to be a medical emergency. The one who repeatedly greets His people with "fear not" would not have wanted to cause such severe concern.

Accepting that Elizabeth's cycle started shortly after Zacharias relayed God's message to her, and she embraced God's will, as Luke 1:24 states, "after these days," she conceived. A normal cycle would place conception between day 10-15. This span suggests Elizabeth got pregnant between January 25-30 of 6 B.C.

Yet more precision can be gained by counting back the exact 177 days (6 X the 29 ½ day month) from the day "at the end of" her sixth month. That date was 9 *Av*, July 23/24, 6 B.C, based upon when Mary's pregnancy began which will be considered in the next chapter. Therefore, counting forward from the beginning of Elizabeth's menstrual cycle and counting backward from the

conception of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist was conceived 9 *Shebet*, January 27-28 of 6 B.C.

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Chapter 2 Summary

God had a specific timing for the birth of His Son. The time of His birth is marked by points that can be established. One clue is from Roman history in the dating of the reign of Herod the Great. A big part of the timing for Christ's birth was also the birth of the one who was called to prepare the way for Him, John the Baptist. The identifier of when John the Baptist was conceived is found in the regulations and timing of the service of the Jewish priests in the Temple.

Through God's plan, announced by an angel, John was to be born to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Logic and the analysis of this text suggest Elizabeth became pregnant with John the Baptist 9 *Shebet*, January 27-28 of 6 B.C.

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We Can Trust Luke

As we evaluate the verses in the Gospel of Luke that pertain to the timing of the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ, Luke's precision might astound some. As a medical doctor, no one should doubt his intelligence. He demonstrated an intellectual's command of the Greek language. It is safe to say he would have been careful with the facts and would have known how to best communicate them in the language. Accepting the truism that historical records tend to be more accurate the closer to the event the records are made, Luke was a contemporary with the disciples. He lived during the events. What he did not know firsthand, he certainly could have learned from accounts of multiple witnesses to the events.

Chapter 3
The Conception of Jesus Christ and the Birth of John the Baptist
(Luke 1:26 - Luke 1:57)

The Prophesied Date of Messiah's Conception

Mary's Faithfulness to God's Plan

"An Angel Delivers God's Command to Joseph" – from *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*

Specific Dates Regarding the Birth of John the Baptist

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*Now at the end of * the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.*

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age;

and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God."

And Mary said, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

* *The specific meaning of the Greek construct Luke used in Luke 1:26 is "at the end of," or the tipping point between one time and the next. The visit was as Elizabeth's sixth was ending. This construct and its implications are examined in chapter 19.*

The Prophesied Date of Messiah's Conception

Scripture says the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary at the end of the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Predicated on the information from the prior chapter and the date of Christ' birth, the angel would have visited Mary 9 Av, July 23/24 of 6 B.C.

Mary did not become pregnant because of the angel's visit. Rather, she became pregnant when the Holy Spirit came upon her. The angel's description of what God's presence would be like strongly implies she would be awake and aware when conception occurred. If she was not going to be aware of the Holy Spirit's presence, why describe what it would be like? This kindness allowed her to know when her pregnancy began.

It seems God sent the angel to visit her at just the right time in Mary's cycle and Christ was conceived shortly after Mary submitted herself to God's plan. This determination can be made because of the tight timing of the events to follow.

Mary conceived soon after the angel's visit, told Joseph immediately, and traveled within days to be with her cousin Elizabeth in the Judean hill country. Mary made

that trip with her husband Joseph. The proof of these events and their sequence is found in the proper translation of Matthew 1:18-19 and in a piece of Roman law. Before evaluating this information, it must be noted that God directed the date of the conception of Jesus Christ to be recorded in a prophecy in the Jewish Talmud, as a testimony to His people.

The conception of Christ was unintentionally identified after the fact in the Jewish Talmud when it says the date in their calendar Messiah would come (came) to Earth. The Jerusalem (early) Talmud teaches the Messiah will be born (or become native) on the day the Temple was destroyed, 9 *Av*. (*Av* is a month in the Jewish calendar falling within July and August.) 9 *Av* was the date when both the first temple built by Solomon and the second temple built by Herod were burned.[1]

9 *Av* is still commemorated by the Jews, unless it falls on a Sabbath. If it does, they commemorate the Temples' destruction and their hope for Messiah's coming on 10 *Av*. Below is a translation of the Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 2:4:12, which identifies the date Messiah would become (became) native to Earth. Life begins at conception, not birth.

> The following story supports what R. Judan said in the name of R. Aibu; It happened that a man was ploughing, when one of his oxen lowed. An Arab passed by and asked, "What are you?" He answered, "I am a Jew." He said to him, "Unharness your ox and untie your plough" (as a mark of mourning). "Why?" he asked. "Because the Temple of the Jews is destroyed." He inquired, "From where do you know this?" He answered, "I know it from the lowing of your ox." While he was conversing with him, the ox lowed again. The Arab said to him, "Harness your ox and tie up your plough, because the deliverer of the Jews is born." "What is his name?" He

> asked; and he answered, "His name is 'Comforter.'" "What is his father's name?" He answered, "Hezekiah." "Where do they live?" He answered, "In Birath Arba in Bethlehem of Judah."[2]

This statement, which the Jews regard as prophecy, was written approximately 300 years after Christ. Of course, no Jew would name Joseph as the Deliverer's father thus pointing to Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah; and the place of Messiah's birth had long ago been declared. Nevertheless, to God's praise, the rabbi was inspired by Him to record when Messiah was conceived, 9 *Av*, although the rabbi thought he was discussing a future event.

If one counts back the remaining 265 days to make the perfect gestation period for a human from 7 *Nisan*, the day of His birth, they arrive at 9 *Av*, July 23/24, in the year 6 B.C.

On the anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple and on the date the second Temple would be burned, God created the ultimate Temple of a Body for His Presence! Notice, Jesus referred to Himself as a Temple when He said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise It up" (John 2:19 *JJM*). His words were a message, not only pointing forward to His burial and Resurrection; He was also pointing back to the day of the miracle of His conception, as God's Temple on Earth!

Some may take umbrage to a Rabbi who was not a follower of Christ being so blessed and used by God. There are those who condemn the Jews for their rejection of Christ and share the same prejudice reflected by Emperor Constantine as he describes the Jews as those, "who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin."[3] "…While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God loves and uses imperfect vessels. Do not be quick to judge those He died to redeem.

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Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

... And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home. Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. (Luke 1:39-57)

Mary's Faithfulness to God's Plan

Luke 1:56 fits with the conception of Christ being 9 *Av*, July 23/24th, 6 B.C. Yet there is more support for the timing of Christ's conception based upon Matthew's Gospel and common sense. Scripture says Mary rose up and left with a sense of expediency to see her cousin Elizabeth. It is fair to ask how this situation played out. Her culture would not have allowed Mary to travel alone for 65-75 miles to the home of Elizabeth. This reality raises the issues: with whom did she travel and when did she tell Joseph of the angelic message?

Again, based upon Luke's Gospel and the time-period of human gestation Mary learned Elizabeth was pregnant before Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy was complete, traveled to Elizabeth very soon afterward, and remained with Elizabeth "about three months" until around the time for John's birth.

The question of with whom she traveled requires analysis. Culture and natural dangers would require an escort and protector. It is possible some friend or family member was traveling south with whom she could make the trip. It is

also possible her father or another relative could have made the trip with her and returned immediately. Such a round-trip would have been a 9-12 day or 130-150 miles round-trip on foot or by donkey. Then, how does Mary get home? Does one hope for a special kindness from someone in Judea? Or does she force a loved one to make the sacrifice of another grueling second round-trip? Either possibility could have happened, but both would have been a huge imposition. Both these theories become unnecessary when Roman tax law sheds light on the situation.

There is another possibility for Mary's companion, which matches Jewish culture and Roman law. Joseph had the right to take her to himself at any time. The assumption she hid the information and was discovered is troubling from an ethical standpoint. It implies deception or cowardice on Mary's part. As will be proven shortly, she did not hide from Joseph what he had the right to know. Rather, Mary told Joseph promptly of the angel's visit and his message.

The angel spoke to him later that night telling him to take her. Joseph obeyed immediately, which allowed the townspeople to believe they had consummated their marriage. He was then in a position to accompany her to Judea and stay with her there. No one would have the chance to raise questions about the evidence of consummation, which will be explained. Further, after the couple's return from Judea and the stay with Elizabeth, the town would not have had the expectation of a marriage feast. The village would have pitied the couple for not having the money for the feast and many may have assumed their trip as a escape from direct embarrassment over their lack. Scripture includes the fact they were poor by including the detail that their sacrifice for Mary's purification after birth was what was expected of poor people (Luke 2:24, Leviticus 12:8).

If the couple had a usual "wedding" and did not leave

immediately, the normal customs would have put Mary in mortal danger. Normally, a bridegroom and his wedding party would take the bride and her party to a prearranged feast. The couple would have immediately gone to a private room and engaged in sexual intercourse to consummate the marriage. As proof of her virginity the bed sheet with blood markings would be immediately given to her father. The sheet demonstrated his daughter was a virgin until her wedding night, providing evidence he had not robbed the bridegroom the price of a virgin (Deuteronomy 22:17).[4] If such proof was not tendered, the husband could immediately, or at any point in the future, claim she was immoral, meaning he was robbed. She would then be in danger of being stoned.

If Joseph had a customary wedding, the production of a stained sheet would have been an expectation. Without this sheet, the implication would have been that Mary was immoral. There would have been social consequences and quite possibly legal ones as well. It makes perfect sense Joseph would have been delighted with the plan to take Mary out of town immediately both to protect her and to see the verification that the Holy Spirit was the reason Mary was pregnant by seeing Elizabeth's miracle. This scenario matches Scripture and the Jewish culture of the day. The Roman law to be discussed proves this timing. Neither Joseph nor anyone else discovered Mary was pregnant weeks or months after the conception.

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"An Angel Delivers God's Command to Joseph" – from *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*

English translations of Matthew 1:18-19 create a crucial misunderstanding. The following is the translation from *Journey of Jesus the Messiah* (*JJM*), a merging of the four Gospels in chronological order by this author available at Gethsemanebooks.store. The three footnotes after this text

appear in *JJM* as numbered and are included to aid in understanding.

> And the beginning[A25] of Jesus Christ was thus – before they had come together, although Mary, His mother, was engaged to Joseph – **He was found**[A26] within the womb, existing from out of the Holy Spirit.[A27]
>
> And Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to expose her[A28], decided to dismiss her from their marriage contract privately.

A25 Matthew 1:18 states "And the beginning of Jesus Christ was thus…" It includes SGW #1078, γένεσις, pronounced "genesis" translated as "beginning." This word has been used to describe both conception and birth in ancient Greek writings. In this case it would be best understood as describing the beginning of the Son of God's existence in human form as the Messiah. The Son of God already existed from eternity. He had, in fact, already visited earth in other forms, for example as the fourth man in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3:16-28. God, likely represented by the Son of God, visited Abram as recorded in Genesis 18:1. The Son of God, being called the Angel of the Lord, visited people on earth several other times: Moses (Exodus. 3:2), Balaam (Numbers 22:22), Hagar (Genesis 16:7-11), Gideon (Judges 6:11-23), Joshua (Judges 2:1), Elijah (I Kings 19:5-18) and Manoah (Judges 13:3-11). Jesus Christ also returned to earth after the Ascension covered in a bright light to speak to Saul of Tarsus who is later called Paul (Acts 9:1-5) and in a visit to John the Beloved recorded in Revelation 1:17-18.

A26 Matthew 1:18 is focused upon Jesus Christ, not Mary. It was He who was "found;" not her, nor her

condition of pregnancy. The verb "found" should not be understood as some surprise discovery made by Mary, Joseph, or any other person. The verb used is SGW #2147, εὑρέθη, pronounced "heurethē" in the aorist indicative passive, third person singular (He, she, or it). This word means to find or obtain something after looking for it or longing for it for a period of time. It was Messiah for which generations had longed. Although English translations have long assumed "she" was discovered or "it," the pregnancy, was discovered, it was Him, Messiah, who was discovered. In Mary's womb, He was finally found.

Note that the Son of God existed from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet the Messiah, the union of the Son of God with human flesh, came into existence at the moment the Holy Spirit placed the Son within a human egg from the body of Mary. Thus, Jesus Christ is: The eternal Spirit, being fully God, joined with human DNA, being fully human flesh.

A27 Matthew 1:18 and 1:20 state the One conceived in her is "from out of the Holy Spirit" both use SGW #1537, ἐκ, pronounced, "ek" translated "from out of." This word means something came from out of someone, something, or somewhere and proceeded to someone, something, or somewhere. It communicates the action of moving from a source to a destination. Understanding this simple word as it relates to Jesus Christ protects from error and false teaching. Jesus Christ was both of the same substance as the Father and the Holy Spirit and one with the Father as well as the Holy Spirit, although being His own person with His own will (Luke 22:42). Jesus Christ's conception was a manifestation of God's presence on Earth as God the Son having proceeded forth from the Holy Spirit.

As part of the Triune God, Jesus chose from eternity when He would be born, when His ministry would begin, and when judgment for sin and evil would occur. Jesus Christ chose to set aside His glory by becoming human. From the moment of His awareness on Earth the only thing which limited His power to heal every malady or strike down every offender was His own choice, which He submitted to the Father. While still in Heaven, Jesus made the choice to accept certain limitations when He chose to be born in human flesh. While on Earth, He made the conscious choice daily to limit His actions to those the Father directed. Yet just because He did not do something does not mean He could not do it. Just because He was fully man, does not mean that at every point while on Earth He was not also fully God.

Consider this, the greater demonstration of power is not killing every offender and healing every illness; it is the self-control to be able to do both these things and yet restrict what He said and what He did to only what the Father directed. Do not confuse Jesus' self-restraint to be inability. Neither perceive delayed reward for obedience or reserved punishment for rebellion as a limitation to the Savior's power. Both promised events will occur in the Father's perfect timing.

A28 Matthew 1:19, in the eastern texts, referring to Joseph's intention to show mercy to Mary by not allowing violence toward her, contains SGW #3856, παραδειγματίσαι, pronounced "paradeigmatizó." This word means "to set forth as an example." The western texts use a different word at this point, SGW #1165, δειγματίσαι, pronounced "deigmatisai" which means "to expose." If Joseph had not acted appropriately, Mary would have been exposed to the charge of adultery. Under Old Testament law,

adultery was punishable by stoning a person to death (Leviticus 20:10). Although only a Roman official operating under the emperor's authority could legally give a death sentence at that time in Israel, Romans would likely not have bothered or cared to protect Mary from a mob.

Mary knew she was pregnant immediately when the miracle occurred. She did not hide the information from Joseph, who had the message confirmed by an angel. It was they who, by faith, found Him and knew He was in the womb "from out of the Holy Spirit." The quotation in the last sentence is vital to understand. How could Mary, Joseph, soon Elizabeth, and ultimately all who believe in Jesus "find" the pregnancy was by the Holy Spirit? Regardless of who discovers or accepts the reality of a miracle, the truth is received only one of two ways: by faith or by a tangible confirmation.

In the case of Joseph, until God sent a direct message to him, he did not accept Mary's pregnancy as being a miracle (Matthew 1:19). It was not until after the angel's visit in a dream telling him Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit that Joseph accepted the message by faith. Yet because Mary had the integrity to tell him immediately, Joseph had a gift of confirmation from God. He not only would have celebrated God's miracle with Mary then; but very soon, he could also cherish the reassuring proof of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

Some might point out that Scripture makes no mention of Joseph being present when Elizabeth greeted Mary, nor does it say he stayed there during the three months Mary resided with Elizabeth (Luke 1:56). In rebuttal, neither is there any mention of Zacharias being in the house then, or at the birth of his son which is recorded in Luke 1:57. Zacharias was certainly living in the house. Further, Joseph staying there as well did not require mention in Scripture. The men were neither pertinent to the women's conversation nor the message the Holy Spirit prompted

Elizabeth to say. During a woman's last trimester or at the baby's delivery, men are not of primary importance. It is entirely believable Joseph could have been standing nearby and there would be no mention of him.

Based upon the timing of Zacharias' priestly rotation and Elizabeth having a normal gestation period, she would have given birth between October 20th and 21st of 6 B.C. According to Luke 1, Mary arrived at Zacharias and Elizabeth's home pregnant and stayed with them for "almost three months." Since Gabriel's message was received "at the end of" Elizabeth's sixth month, which was July 23/24 of 6 B.C., and allowing several days for travel it is safe to presume that Mary was present to help Elizabeth with John's delivery. Then she left a few days afterward. This plan makes perfect sense.

This timing also makes clear how Scripture fits within the Roman tax law of the day. It proves Mary slept in Joseph's bedroom, although without sexual intercourse, while they were in Nazareth before they made the trip to see Elizabeth (Matthew 1:24-25).

The Gospel writers understood the couple was still only engaged. The townspeople would have assumed, per Jewish custom, the couple had consummated their marriage when Mary left Joseph's house in the morning. No one would have challenged their traveling together; otherwise, the couple would have been culturally prohibited. Based upon Roman tax law, Mary had joined, and not been thrown out of, Joseph's household before the "date of declaration" for the tax. This fact would have required her to be reported on his tax form. Apparently, as implied in Scripture, the law in the Syrian region of the Roman Empire required she report along with him. Therefore, she was required to make the trip with him back to Bethlehem several months later (Luke 2:4-5).

If Mary had not already been with Joseph before her stay with Elizabeth, the "date of declaration" would have

passed before the three-month period ended and she would not have been required to be included on his form nor make the later trip with Joseph. The "date of declaration" for a Roman census was the last day of the year prior to the year of reporting. This date in the Syrian Region for the census when Jesus was born was September 12 of 6 B.C. Mary's return from Elizabeth's home was after this "date of declaration." The date of declaration will be discussed further in chapter 4.

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Specific Dates Regarding the Birth of John the Baptist and Chapter 3 Summary

The following chart describes the beginning of service of the priestly courses, Zacharias' message, and the likely timing of travel for John the Baptist's birth. For more details refer to the appendix, "**The Timing of the Divisions of the Priests**."

Sabbath, 1 *Tishrei* (September 19, **959 B.C.**)
This date began a week of preparation for the Temple (all priests served).

Sabbath, 8 *Tishrei* (September 26, 959 B.C.)
The altar is dedicated, beginning of week of dedication (all priests continued in service).

Sabbath, 15 *Tishrei* (October 3, 959 B.C.)
The beginning of Feast of Tabernacles (all priests continued in service).

Sabbath, 22 *Tishrei*, called "The Eighth Day" of the feast (October 10, 959 B.C.)
This date started the rotation of the priests, as the first course offered the daily sacrifices.

Sabbath, November 28 – Sabbath December 5, 959 B.C.
Zacharias' eighth course, Abijah, began service.

Sabbath, January 9 – Sabbath, January 16, **6 B.C.**
This week was the eighth course's 2070th rotation of service, during which an angel visited Zacharias.

January 16, 6 B.C. (Saturday) between 7-10 p.m.
Zacharias arrived home and Elizabeth accepted the message and began menstruation.

January 27/28, 6 B.C.
The Scripturally supported date of the conception of John the Baptist.

July 23/24, 6 B.C.
The end of the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, when Mary received her angelic visit.

Sabbath, 9 *Av* (July 23/24, 6 B.C.)
Date Mary received the divine message and conceived Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:18). She told Joseph about the angelic message before the next night.

July 24/25, 6 B.C. (Saturday night)
While sleeping, Joseph was visited by Gabriel in a dream and took Mary into his bedroom that night (Mt. 1:24).

July 25, 6 B.C. (Sunday)
Mary and Joseph leave for Elizabeth's home, 65-75 miles away, a 6-day walk (Luke 1:39)

July 30, 6 B.C. (Friday afternoon)
Mary and Joseph arrived at Elizabeth's home before Sabbath began in the evening.

September 12, 6 B.C.

This date was the Roman census Date of Declaration. By this date Mary had to be part of Joseph's household to be required to make the later trip to Bethlehem for registration.

October 20/21, 6 B.C.

Most likely date John the Baptist's 266-day gestation period was complete. Most likely John's birthday.

October 24 or 25, 6 B.C. (Sunday or Monday)

Having stayed 86-87 days, almost 3 lunar months as Luke 1:56 states, Mary and Joseph leave for Nazareth.

Consider this, women often want another woman who is family or a close friend to support them during delivery. Elizabeth's mother would almost certainly have been deceased. If she had sisters, they would not have been as young and energetic as Mary. More importantly, no other relative would have the same depth of understanding of the situation as Mary. Mary would have been the perfect woman to have around to help during delivery.

Chapter 4
The Census and the Birth of Christ
(Luke 2:1-2)

Dating the Census of Caesar Augustus

The Timing Information Provided by the Statement, "First Census Taken While Quirinius Was Ruler of Syria"

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Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. (Luke 2:1)

Dating the Census of Caesar Augustus

Clear information regarding the date of the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ will be presented. However, several incorrect theories regarding how and when to date the census are first presented in the next few paragraphs.

Censuses were generally conducted within the city of Rome every five years, beginning in the 6th century B.C. until early in Augustus' reign.[1] It is a misunderstanding to confuse the 5-year system in the city with the later censuses conducted in the provinces, also called regions.

It is also an error to assume a periodic census done within the regions of the empire was what brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. Much has been written about Roman censuses by religious historians, particularly the periodic system in the Egyptian province of the empire. This interest is because some believe the Egyptian province's seven-year interval employed during the period may have determined when Joseph and Mary made their trip.[2]

Based upon the timing and protocol of the Egyptian province's cycle some have projected a census of the empire was due to occur in 9/8 B.C. The Egyptian province's cycle of a called census in 9/8 B.C could work nicely to fit with the implementation of a census in 6/5 B.C. since they took time to conduct. Although this would fit the timing presented in this work, such a census was not what brought the couple to Bethlehem.

Further, since the Egyptian timing fits, some have assumed the schedule employed in the province of Egypt was the same as the other provinces of the empire. Therefore, they suggest the census mentioned in Luke 2 was done on the Egyptian schedule. This assumption is errant. Roman historian P. A. Burnt surmises the Syrian region conducted censuses on, at least, a 12-year interval. Israel was governed by this region and ultimately absorbed by it. Other parts of the empire conducted censuses in other intervals.[3] Thus the timing of the Egyptian region is irrelevant.

Generally, the empire deferred to local customs and left local administration of a census to local officials.[4] This flexibility is why the Egyptian province's schedule was different from the neighboring Syrian region.

It is true Herod the Great, the king of Israel, reported directly to the emperor, as Judea was not formally absorbed into the Syrian province until A.D. 6. Yet Scripture informs, Israel's census of 6/5 B.C. was controlled by the ruler of the census over the Syrian region, Quirinius (Luke 2:2). As will be shown, Roman history specifically states this fact.

Scripture does not say the census that brought the couple to Bethlehem was a regular census based upon either the five-year ancient schedule of the city of Rome or any other subset of the empire. Quite the contrary, Luke 2:1 says it was a census specifically ordered by Caesar Augustus that brought the family to Bethlehem.

History corroborates not only the source of the census Luke addressed in his Gospel, but also the year it was ordered. The census was one of three personally ordered by Caesar Augustus according to his journal. These censuses apparently began in the city of Rome, with a registration and a *lustrum* (a ceremony of absolution) for the citizens of the city in the years 28 B.C., 8 B.C. and 14 A.D. Census work would have then followed/continued in the various provinces and territories. Here is a translation of Augustus' words recorded in *Res Gestae:*

> … in my sixth consulship [28 B.C.], with Marcus Agrippa as my colleague, I conducted a census of the people. I performed the lustrum after an interval of forty-two years [since the last lustrum]. At this lustrum 4,063,000 Roman citizens were recorded. Then a second time, acting alone, by virtue of the consular power, I completed the taking of the census in the consulship of Gaius Censorimus and Gaius Asinius [8 B.C.]. At this lustrum 4,233,000 Roman citizens were recorded. And a third time I completed the taking of the census in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius [14 A.D.], by virtue of the consular power and with my son Tiberius Caesar as my colleague. At this lustrum 4,937,000 Roman citizens were recorded.[5]

Each time, it appears the work was carried forward outside the city during the next few years. Fifth century Christian historian and apologist, Paulus Orosius, recorded regarding the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem: "[Augustus] ordered that a census be taken of each province everywhere."[6]

In an age of slow travel, a census took years to complete within the provinces. The census of 28 B.C. was still under way in Gaul and Spain in 27 B.C.[7] and resulted in a

revolt in Thebes that lasted at least into 26 B.C.[8] From announcement to completion, Roman censuses took up to 5 years.[9]

It is the position of many scholars that the enrollment year of the census forcing Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem was conducted during 6-5 B.C.[10] With Augustus' decree happening in 8 B.C., the time necessary to communicate the demand, and the allowance for time so citizens could travel to their reporting locations throughout the empire, it is entirely understandable the twelve-month reporting period for the census Luke describes was 6-5 B.C. in Israel. The probable reason for the census is explored in the appendix: "**Censuses and Oaths.**"

While Julius Caesar established the Julian calendar beginning each year with January 1 for Roman governance, the Julian calendar would not have been used for census data collection in each province or "kingdom" within the empire. Neither would the religious calendar in Israel, which began the year near the spring equinox, been used for the census either.[11] Until the latter part of the first century A.D., Israel used their own Hebrew lunar calendar for governmental dating purposes, which was equivalent to the Macedonian calendar in its early correlation, although using different names for the months.[12] These calendars started the year near the fall equinox.

Although the Caesars had men in charge of Rome's political subdivisions and different ones in charge of its various legions, they appointed another set of individuals to be responsible for its censuses and the monies they generated for the treasury. Caesar had appointed a *hēgĕmōn* (ruler) (SGW #2232) of the entire Syrian region, including Israel, for the census. It would have been up to the discretion of this Roman official who directed the census/taxation in the region to determine its schedule.[13]

According to archaeologist, historian, and New Testament scholar Sir William Mitchell Ramsay:

> Though the Egyptian (local) year was employed, the census was carried out by Roman officials, and formed part of the Imperial system of administration.
>
> It was the habit of the Romans in the East to adapt their arrangements to the custom of the country. They did not force the natives to adopt the Roman system of arranging the year and the months, but rather modified their practice to suit the native year, using an Asian year in the Province Asia, an Egyptian year in the Province Egypt, and so on.[14]

There is no indication the Roman official in charge of the census diverted from the Macedonian calendar for the census. It had been used in the region for political dating since at least the Seleucid period, which began in 312 B.C. until the middle of the first century A.D.[15] Therefore, the Macedonian calendar would have determined the 12-month reporting period of the census when Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem.

It has been suggested the implementation of the census Augustus had ordered, and to which Luke refers, was delayed in the Syrian region due to a major war being fought in the area. The Roman general who led the campaign, Quirinius, could then oversee the census in the region, the next position he had been assigned. Whether on schedule, or delayed by war, the twelve-month period the people of the region had to report was during 6/5 B.C. Specifically, using the Hebrew/Macedonian calendar system with the Hebrew month names, the period began on 1 *Tishrei* of 6 B.C. and ended on the last day of *Elul* of 5 B.C.[16] According to the dating of the website CGSF.org, the reporting year would have been September 13, of 6 B.C. through October 1, of 5 B.C.[17]

Scripture also provides the timing of the census. After Luke 1:57-79 describes John the Baptist's birth and Zacharias' message concerning his son, Luke 2:1 says, "in those days" the decree went out for the census. Based upon the dating presented earlier, John the Baptist's birthday would have been between October 23 - 25, 6 B.C., just after the "reporting year" began.

Those reporting for a census would have to "declare" all the residents of their household and their assets as of the last day of the previous year, called the "census year." The household included all its residents: parents, children, slaves, tenants, and anyone living in the home on that date.[18] During the next twelve months, the head of the house was required to make out the report for the household.

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This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor [ruler] *of Syria.* (Luke 2:2)

The Timing Information Provided by the Statement, "First Census Taken While Quirinius Was Ruler of Syria"

The accuracy of Luke's account of the timing of the birth of Christ has often been attacked using two objections. One wrongful objection is whether Luke was correct in saying John the Baptist's ministry began during the 15th year of Tiberius' reign. This topic is analyzed later in this text and extensively in an appendix to this book: "**The Dating of Tiberius' Co-Regency**."

The second major attack on Luke's account deals with Quirinius. History clearly and definitively records that Quirinius reigned as the political governor over the region

of Syria from A.D. 6-11, but ill-informed critics seem to be unaware of his earlier positions. This results in their erroneous disagreement with Luke's timing of the start of John the Baptist's ministry. The critics' error has led to further mistaken claims that either Luke's Gospel must have been written much later than it was, or that this Gospel was written by someone who did not know the details of Christ's ministry.

Some critics base their position on the fact it was not normal for a man to rule the same area twice. Therefore, they assert Quirinius could not have been the governor of Syria earlier when Christ was born, since it is widely recognized that he ruled the region later.

The defense of Luke's accuracy has involved a few tactics, some of which have been quite weak. One defense is Luke confused the spelling of Quirinius and Quinctilius Varus, the governor of Syria from 9-6 B.C.[19] This defense does not have significant merit. There is no evidence anywhere in his Gospel or in the book of Acts, which is also written by Luke, that he is loose with information. Just the opposite, time and again Luke shows depth of knowledge of the Greek language, careful word usage, and the precision learned from his trade as a doctor. It is not logical to assume he would have been fooled by the somewhat similar names.

A second far more viable defense is the proof Quirinius did have two reigns as the political governor of Syria. Quirinius clearly had the rank of governor of Syria when the next census after the birth of Christ occurred in A.D. 6 (the second tax of Israel under Quirinius' control). This census was conducted as the tetrarch of Judea was eliminated and the territory was placed under direct Roman rule as it was absorbed into the Syrian Imperial Province.[20]

The political shift resulted in a census, which no doubt included a loyalty oath, and a direct tax to Rome. See the

appendix entitled: "**Censuses and Oaths**" for more details on census oaths. Absorbing the Jews into direct Roman rule, thus eliminating the facade of a Jewish state within the Roman Empire, sparked a revolt centered in the area around Nazareth led by Judas of Galilee as mentioned in Acts 5:37.[21] Judas of Galilee asserted, to pay a tax to the Romans was to bow the knee to men as their lords and make oneself a slave.[22] He and his supporters opposed the tax to such a degree they committed acts of violence even on fellow Jews who violated their understanding of the law by complying with the Roman census order.[23] Ultimately, thousands died due to their failed rebellion, many by crucifixion at the hands of the victorious Romans.

Quirinius, as Governor of Syria, succeeded in quelling this revolt and implementing the census and tax. However, A.D. 6-11 was not the first time he carried that rank. It is true that it was uncommon for a man to be trusted to be the political governor of the same area twice. Quirinius was, however, a rarity as he had earned the respect and trust of both Augustus and then Tiberius. A longer explanation of how Quirinius earned such trust is contained in the appendix: "**Quirinius, Ruler of Syria**."

Quirinius was installed the first time as the political governor of Syria near the end of 4 B.C. after the death of Herod the Great. Chronologists Wiesler and Zumpt share this position.[24] Quirinius then remained as political governor of Syria in this, his first term, until 1 B.C.[25] This information is fantastic evidence and an adequate defense for a chronologist or Biblical apologist who believes Christ was born that late, but He was not.

Luke was completely accurate in saying Quirinius was responsible for more than one census within the Syrian region. In making this statement, Luke provided clear timing information concerning the census that forced Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem. Luke wanted his readers to understand this census was the first of more

than one during which Quirinius was a ruler over the Syrian region. Confusion on the issue lies not with Luke, but in a failure to understand the Greek word Luke used that is translated into English as "governor" in Luke 2:2. He uses the Greek noun *hēgemoneuontos* SGW #2232 (present participle active – genitive masculine singular) of the verb *hēgĕmŏnĕuō* SGW #2230. This word means "to rule" or "to reign/govern." Luke's use of this specific word allows for a third line of defense for the accuracy of his Gospel related to Luke 2:2 and Quirinius being "ruler" rather than "governor" as English translations commonly use.

The word *hēgemoneuontos* could rightly be used for a political governor, but it was also used for two other things. It was used for military commanders.[26] Quirinius was such a "general" in charge of the legions garrisoned in Syria. He had been given charge of the battle to eliminate resistance by the Homanadenses people of the mountains of Cilicia in central Turkey. In this capacity, Quirinius would have rightly been called the *hēgĕmōn* (SGW #2232) of Syria since that is where the legions under his command were garrisoned. Some may argue his military service is the reason Luke refers to Quirinius being *hēgĕmōn* of Syria his first time during the birth of Christ, but it is not the correct answer.

The fourth defense for Luke's accuracy, and the one proving him correct, is found in the definition of the word *hēgemoneuontos*. In addition to being used for a political governor or a Roman general, the term could also be used for a person who was the direct representative of the emperor with responsibility for things related to imperial taxation in an area. Quirinius did serve as Roman general over the legions in the Syrian region likely beginning in 7 B.C. and ending in 6 or early 5 B.C. Quirinius also served his first term as political governor of Syria from late 4 B.C. until 1 B.C. Yet most importantly, between these two positions Quirinius had direct responsibility over the imperial census in the region of Syria which, according to

Ramsay, would have begun in "late summer or autumn" of 6 B.C.[27] Quirinius was rightly referred to by Luke with the title of *hēgĕmōn* when he says "this was the first census taken while Quirinius was *hēgemoneuontos* [ruler] of Syria."

Consider the progression and timing of Quirinius' assignments. He was general of the Syrian legions from 7-6 B.C. Then he served as representative of the emperor for the census/taxation that began in the fall of 6 B.C. After the completion of his census duties, he assumed the political leadership of the Syrian region in late 4 B.C. The timing works. He would have had no great burden of travel, and his leadership transitions would be especially smooth since he already knew the local leadership.

Again, the title *hēgĕmōn* could be used to describe three types of assignments: the chief general of a military campaign, the top official overseeing the collection of the imperial taxes for an area, or the leading political ruler of an area.[28] Quirinius served in all three of these capacities and would have been called in Greek *hēgĕmōn,* translatable into English as "governor" or "ruler." In the first two cases, the *hēgĕmōnĕuō* authority for the assignment of duties directly accountable to the emperor over the emperor's legions and the responsibility for the census/taxation of the empire would have **exceeded** the authority of the political governor of the area with regard to those assignments. To see a more detailed defense of the accuracy of Luke's record in saying Quirinius was *hēgĕmōn* of Syria during more than one census, please read the appendix entitled, "**Quirinius, Ruler of Syria**."

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Chapter 4 Summary

The evidence points persuasively to Christ's conception being on 9 *Av*, July 24, 6 B.C. Mary told Joseph about the angelic visit and the miraculous conception promptly and the two left for the Judean hill country to visit Elizabeth by the morning of July 26, 6 B.C. By the dating it can be determined that they returned to Nazareth after John the Baptist was born.

Joseph's later trip with Mary to Bethlehem to file his report for the census was legally required to be completed between September 13, 6 B.C. and October 1, 5 B.C. according to the calendar computed by CGSF.org. This information points to September 12, 6 B.C. as the date of declaration for the census that brought the Christ's family to Bethlehem. By this date, Mary must have been part of Joseph's household to be required to report with Joseph for the census.

The census of 6/5 B.C. was the first of two times Quirinius would have carried the title "*hēgĕmōn* of Syria" during a Roman census. The verb *Hēgĕmŏnĕuō* is the Greek word for "to rule" or "to reign," *from which the noun Hēgemoneuontos "ruler" is connected.* Quirinius was Augustus' appointed "ruler of the census for the province of Syria" for the census of 6/5 B.C. Later, he was political "ruler of Syria" from 4-1 B.C. and again between A.D. 6-11, during the next census.

Proof of the Use of the Hebrew/Macedonian Calendar in the Syrian Province

Josephus, the famous first century A.D. Jewish historian, sometimes used **both** the Roman dating method of identifying the reigns of consuls during a Julian calendar year and the Hebrew or Macedonian calendar to mark major events. Josephus identified the beginning of the reign of Herod the Great in 40 B.C. by using two markers. He used the Roman consul system, which began their service January 1st unless there were special circumstances,[29] and the Olympiad-year notation system.

Failure to recognize that the consuls changed during the middle of 40 B.C. and Josephus' use of the Hebrew/ Macedonian calendar system starting in the fall for his Olympiad-year notation has caused some to erroneously impute error to Josephus' timing of Herod's reign.

Chapter 5
The Family's Trip and Arrival in Bethlehem (Luke 2:3-6)

The Reason Sons of David Resided in Nazareth

The Requirement for Joseph and Mary to Travel to Bethlehem

The Timing of Joseph and Mary's Trip

Evidence Mary Gave Birth Soon after Arriving in Bethlehem

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And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David.
(Luke 2:3-4)

The Reason Sons of David Resided in Nazareth

Most of the Jews of Judea were taken into captivity to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar after his second conquest of the Kingdom of Judea in 586 B.C. Judea included the hill country of Joseph's ancestors. The Medes and Persians then supplanted the Babylonians as the masters of Asia in 539 B.C. A year later, King Cyrus of Persia permitted the Jews to return to their native land. Some returned very quickly to their ancestral homes, including 123 sons of Bethlehem (Ezra 2:1, 21).

Bethlehem was the home of King David's family and where he grew up. Very likely many of the men mentioned in Ezra were kin to King David. However, some from the royal

family delayed their return to Israel. One clan did not return until around 100 B.C.[1]

By 100 B.C. the Davidic Dynasty was long since removed from power and the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) were in charge. Although the Maccabees revolted against pagan rulers in 167 B.C. due to their desire to honor God, as time passed their passion for righteousness was replaced with a lust for power.

In 104 B.C. the great-great-grandson of Judas Maccabeus, the founder of the Maccabean revolt, Aristobulos I came to power. Aristobulos I made himself both king and high priest prompting outrage among the Pharisees. After his death the next year, his son, the vicious Alexander Jannaeus, succeeded him and ruled until 76 B.C. Jannaeus' reign was a time of constant wars, including the brutal slaughter of many Pharisees and their families, as he tried to obliterate dissent.

It is no wonder new residents of Israel from the true line of kings, the Davidic line, would avoid Judea and the spotlight. Neither Aristobulos I, his son Jannaeus, nor their allies would have been keen to hear of the return of a group of men from the Davidic line to Israel. It was best for the returning clan to be inconspicuous. Rather than going to Bethlehem, "the City of David", they moved to a backwater area and joined or established the small village of Nazareth.[2] Matthew 2:23 records Christ's coming from this town as predicted in Isaiah 11:1:

> Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
> And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

The last sentence is confusing since the word Nazareth does not appear in the Old Testament. The word Nazareth has its root in the Hebrew word "nètser" (SHW #5342) which means branch.

Zechariah 3:8 also prophetically points to Jesus Christ as a High Priest named Joshua, the one who will be called a Branch. This Old Testament Joshua, the name presented as Jesus when referring to Messiah in English New Testaments, is a metaphor in this verse:

> Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you – indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.

When Jesus was called a "Nazarene" or "Jesus of Nazareth" the town's name was being used as part of His name. Each time those statements were made He was in effect being called a branch. Christ used this metaphor calling Himself the "True Vine" as He spoke of those abiding in Him being branches that bear much fruit and those branches not bearing fruit being cast into the fire (John 15:1-8).

These fulfilled prophecies are magnificent. Yet Matthew's acknowledgment of their fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth is important beyond its surface meaning. First, Isaiah's prophetic words are recorded 600 years before the village even existed.[3] This fulfillment is a demonstration that the Bible is God's Word. Second, Matthew 2:23 says it is recording the fulfillment of prophecy. Yet there is no verse in the Old Testament that Matthew 2:23 fulfills if Matthew was written in Greek, for then its name does not tie into the Hebrew word "nètser." Accepting that Matthew was written in Hebrew, it is easy to comprehend "Nazareth" is a play on the words of Isaiah 11:1 and Zechariah 3:8 that say the Messiah would be a "Branch." Since the wordplay of "branch" does not exist if the Gospel was written in Greek, those rejecting Matthew was written in Hebrew are compelled to interpret several Old Testament sections together to contrive a fulfillment of prophecy in Matthew 2:23. This effort is unnecessary and unfortunate.

Regarding the location of the village itself, the clan of

David's kin intentionally placed themselves away from their ancestral home of Bethlehem, the political hub of Jerusalem, the cultural hub of Jericho, the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or any major trade route.[4] They wanted to hide their royal status. They did not want to be seen as a threat and risk their lives. These descendants of King David or his clan were so successful at being inconspicuous, their ancestry was generally disregarded. Nazareth was inconsequential. Today, many believe it was looked on with disfavor. They assume this sentiment is what Nathaniel meant when he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" in John 1:46.[5]

A brilliant Christian writer who was also an expert in the traditions and culture of his Jewish ancestors, Alfred Edersheim, suggests Nathaniel's quote regarding Nazareth is not an insult. Rather it was a reference to the fact it was not politically significant, and most importantly, it was not prophesied to be the place of the Messiah's birth.[6] In John 1:46, SGW #5100 "tis" can be translated "anyone or anything" "someone or something" or "certain one or thing." It precedes "agathos" (SGW #18) that is translated "good."

This writer agrees with Edersheim's conclusions. Here is the translation of John 1:46 and the pertinent footnote found in *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*, with bold here for emphasis.

> And Nathaniel asked him, "Can *that* **certain good thing** come from out of Nazareth?[B8] "Come and see!" Philip says to him.

B8 John 1:46 includes words of Nathaniel that translators have interpreted as defamatory to the town of Nazareth. Rather, the language can be understood to imply Nathanael's sharing of the common knowledge that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. A similar questioning of Jesus' place of origin occurs in John 7:41. Rather than

> insulting the town, Nathanael's words were a reflection of a good question from a man who appreciated and understood Messianic prophecy. Nathanael was simply describing the "Messianic Kingdom" or the "Messiah" as a "certain good thing" and stating how absurd to suggest that the Messiah would come from Nazareth instead of Bethlehem. This analysis is supported by the writings of Jewish-Christian scholar Alfred Edersheim in two of his works: *Jesus the Messiah*, pages 68-69 and in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, page 349-350.
>
> Notice, Nathanael did not use the common word for "good" the SGW #2570, καλός, pronounced "kalos." Rather he uses SGW #18, ἀγαθὸν, "good thing" from "good," ἀγαθός, pronounced "agathos." This word means something was **good because it originates from God** (*HELPS Word-studies*). Jesus uses the same word to say, "No one is good but God alone," Mark 10:18.

Nathaniel was directly questioning the birth of the Messiah in Nazareth, stating it was impossible. Remember, Nathaniel made this response to Andrew's assertion they had found the Messiah, who was of that city (John 1:45).

Nazareth was not looked down upon by Jews. It had standing as a town righteous people were associated with. Nazareth was one of the 24 towns or villages that were centers for a course or division of the priests. Therefore, it was a place for gathering and prayer for priests as Edersheim, says:

> Nazareth was also one of the great centres [sic] of Jewish Temple-life. It has already been indicated that the Priesthood was divided into twenty-four "courses," which, in turn, ministered in the Temple. The Priests of the

> "course" which was to be on duty always gathered in certain towns, whence they went up in company to Jerusalem, while those of their number who were unable to go spent the week in fasting and prayer. Now Nazareth was one of these Priest-centres [sic].[7]

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... in order to register along with Mary ... (Luke 2:5a)

The Requirement for Joseph and Mary to Travel to Bethlehem

Some have called into question the entire account of the birth of Christ in Luke's Gospel because they dispute whether Mary, or even Joseph was required to travel to Bethlehem. They question whether such things were required for Roman taxations. As before, Luke was correct, and the critics are wrong.

A papyrus scroll containing an edict by G. Bibius Maximus, a Roman Governor of Egypt, has been discovered that clears up both points. It states:

> The enrolment [sic] by household being at hand, it is necessary to notify all who for any cause soever [sic] are outside their nomes to return to their domestic hearths, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrolment [sic] and continue steadfastly in the husbandry that belongeth to them.[8]

This quote documents the requirement for citizens who were out of their districts to return to their home or hometown to be enrolled for taxation.[9] The papyrus further states that family was included in the order and in the taxation.[10]

One could argue the papyrus' record of a rule in the Province of Egypt does not mean it was also the rule in the Province of Syria, since allowances for different local calendars were permitted in the provinces. Further, this writer does not know if this edict related to a regular provincial census or the one instituted by the emperor that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. Yet unless refuting documentation is someday found, why would one assume the Emperor's census in Syria did not have a similar regulation. In the absence of disputing evidence, there is no reason for even a skeptic to doubt either that Luke's record stating travel was required for the family to their hometown is correct or that the rule was not consistent with all Roman censuses and all Roman provinces.

Again, the reason Mary was required to make the trip with Joseph was because she was a part of his household on the date of declaration for the census, September 12, 5 B.C. This fact proves Mary had told Joseph about the angelic visit and her being with Child by the Holy Spirit and spent a night in his bedchamber before spending three months with Elizabeth.

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... who was engaged to him, and was with child.
(Luke 2:5b)

The Timing of Joseph and Mary's Trip

Mary's pregnancy would have been a month and a half along when the reporting year of the census began. The couple was in the middle of their three-month stay with Zacharias and Elizabeth when the reporting period began. The question can be asked, "Why didn't they go directly to Bethlehem to register in late October before returning to

Nazareth?" The answer could be that the decree had not been announced throughout the countryside until after the birth of John the Baptist.

Perhaps, Joseph and Mary arrived back in Nazareth shortly before hearing about the census and regretted not getting the registration done on the way home. Or more likely, the delay involved the oath declaration which was customarily required with all censuses. Joseph may have read the required oath for the census and could not stomach or justify making such a statement. Perhaps he was hoping God would direct him how to avoid the oath. Although the exact oath he would have been required to make has at this time been lost to history, similar oaths of the period included swearing allegiance to false gods, including the Caesars, and local kings. Whatever the case, it is clear God's timing was in play. To see what the oath might have looked like, read the appendix, "**Censuses and Oaths**."

Once a good woman is pregnant, her life revolves around what is best for the health and safety of the baby. One can imagine Mary and Joseph had some serious discussions concerning the trip and the Baby's health. Mary would have likely wanted to wait until the Baby was well advanced in development before making the trip. The longer she waited, the tougher it would be on her, but it would have been safer for the Baby. Except for God's protection, any misstep by her, or her donkey, if they had one, could have resulted in a fall, potentially causing a tragic miscarriage. If a fall causes the water of the placenta to break and labor to commence during the last month of pregnancy, the Child would be developed enough to survive outside the womb. They knew the pregnancy was the result of a miracle by God and He would protect the Baby, but why disrespect God by putting Him to the test in doing something profoundly unwise?

One can presume Joseph raised a few points as well. Beyond the matter just discussed, there were two reasons

Joseph would have wanted to wait until the last month to travel. First, it seems logical he would have wanted to work his job as long as possible to save the money necessary, not just for the trip, but to stay in Bethlehem for a while. To save a grueling round trip, he knew they should stay until at least after the 42-day period for purification and sacrifice due to the birth of a first-born son (Leviticus 12:1-8). This rite of purification required a visit to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was close to Bethlehem but far from Nazareth. Second, there is no way Joseph would have wanted to travel in winter and risk his wife's health. Therefore, Joseph would have been very agreeable to wait until the advent of spring, which would have been near the end of Mary's pregnancy, before they traveled.

Nevertheless, it is highly doubtful Joseph would have wanted to wait until the very last few weeks to travel. There is no way a husband wants to have his wife deliver her baby along a road with no shelter. Weather was one consideration, but there were also wild animals around. Israel had lions and bears. These dangerous animals would have been drawn by the sounds and smells of childbirth.

Further, unless he is a doctor, no husband then or now wants to be the one to deliver his own child. He wants a trained and experienced person present and in charge. Assumedly, Joseph would not have waited much beyond the beginning of the last month of Mary's pregnancy to start the trip. He probably wanted to be at his destination at least a couple of weeks before the birth, and every day they waited before leaving Nazareth would have been agony for him.

The timing of the birth would put them in the vicinity of Jerusalem right before a religious feast Joseph would have been required to attend. Therefore, in addition to the Baby being born, they could fulfill their census obligations and observe religious obligations related to both the Feast of

Unleavened Bread and those required after the birth (Leviticus 12:1-8). They were, however, not the only people who had figured out the logic of traveling for the census and staying for the required religious feast. It is a reasonable guess the couple arrived in Bethlehem shortly before dusk began 7 *Nisan*. They probably arrived during the daylight hours of April 13 on 6 *Nisan*. This determination is because all of the lodging available for guests or for renting were filled by the time they arrived.[11] If they had arrived much before that day, they would not have found the town full when they arrived. The reason for the crowding will be examined in the next chapter.

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While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. (Luke 2:6)

Evidence Mary Gave Birth Soon after Arriving in Bethlehem

Scripture does not say how long Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem before Jesus Christ was born. It says the birth occurred "while they were there." Setting aside the array of evidence pointing to 7 *Nisan* specifically, there is other evidence about the period of the birth date of Christ. The people attending the Feast of Unleavened Bread were required to be in Jerusalem or its immediate outskirts before dusk April 21 of 5 B.C., the start of 15 *Nisan*. Bethlehem was not close enough to Jerusalem to fulfill this requirement. As the people left Bethlehem, space would have opened up for a guest room for Mary and Joseph. The fact this space was not available for them at the birth means Christ was born before 15 *Nisan*.

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Chapter 5 Summary

Joseph was part of a clan of descendants of King David's royal family. This clan settled in a backwater area and founded, or joined in founding, the village of Nazareth. This location was most likely chosen to be discreet and avoid being perceived as a political threat. There is evidence Roman census/tax law required each family to travel back to their town of legal origin to register. This evidence supports Luke's clear statement. The fact Mary was required to make the trip with Joseph proves she told Joseph about her pregnancy immediately and was part of his legal household for the census.

The couple chose, or were led by the Holy Spirit to choose, the wisest time possible to make the trip for the health and safety of the Baby. The couple arrived shortly before the birth occurred. Scripture, ancient history, and logic all point to Christ's birth being during the Passover Season.

Close Enough to Count as Jerusalem

The Talmud records there were villages close enough to Jerusalem to customarily host pilgrims for the feasts.[12] The liturgically legal vicinity around Jerusalem to stay for the feast included the Garden of Gethsemane adjacent to the city.[13] Pilgrims also stayed in or near Bethphage and Bethany. These towns were less than two miles away[14] and were noted in the Talmud for their hospitality to those who were pilgrims to the three feasts in Jerusalem.[15]

Long Enough to Count

Jews were not required to stay for the entirety of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which began with Passover. Once they fulfilled their obligation to sacrifice at the temple which was generally accomplished on the first or second day of the feast, they were permitted to leave. Most would have been on their way home by 17 *Nisan*.[16]

Chapter 6
The Stay in Bethlehem (Luke 2:7-24)

The Reason Bethlehem Was Full When They Arrived

The Time of Year Shepherds Would Have Watched Flocks Near Bethlehem

The Period the Family Stayed in Bethlehem

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And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

The Reason Bethlehem Was Full When They Arrived

The census was a major cause of Bethlehem being crowded when Christ was born, but it was certainly not the only reason the town was full. With a whole year to report for the census, those required to travel to Bethlehem for it would not have all been there at the same time, nor would they have had to stay there long for the census itself. Yet Scripture strongly implies Bethlehem was packed when Mary and Joseph sought housing before Mary delivered Jesus Christ because the guest quarters of the home where they stayed was already filled and they were only able to stay where animals were quartered and not in the guest room.

The week-long Rite of Purification before Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the other reason Bethlehem was packed. The three great feasts required a Jew to stay within Jerusalem or very close walking distance. Bethlehem was only five miles away from Jerusalem. It would take just one to two hours to travel to Jerusalem from Bethlehem on foot or by donkey. This

distance, however, was too far for a Jew to stay there during the feasts. However, it was close enough to allow for the brief visit on the fourth day of the purification custom. On that day the person needing purified was required to come to the Temple when they had been defiled, at least before the three great feasts.[1] Therefore, the need to participate in the one-week purification process along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was in the middle of the census reporting year, would have filled the guest rooms in Bethlehem. In the spring of 5 B.C. it would have made sense to accomplish two things during one trip to the area: the census and the religious requirement of attending a feast.[2]

Passover was the evening of April 20, 5 B.C, just after 15 *Nisan* began at dusk. Yet due to the need for purification, guest accommodations in Bethlehem would have filled a little more than one week before the Day of Preparation the day before Passover. The crowds would have filled Bethlehem by the afternoon of 7 *Nisan*.

Regarding the need for purification, Scripture specified a person only touching or being touched by an unclean object was defiled. Yet this secondary defilement did not require a week-long purification. These people were only unclean until evening (Numbers 19). Directly touching the dead, being in a room with a dead body, and touching a human bone or grave mandated the full one-week purification process, Numbers 19:18. The requirement for purification is mentioned in John 11:55:

> *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves.*

Regulations and Receipts

The purification procedure, which God prescribed through Moses as recorded in Numbers 19, required a person who was ceremonially clean to sprinkle clean water that had been mixed with ash from the red heifer on the person who had been defiled. They would use a sprig of hyssop to administer the water on the third and the seventh day during the week of purification.

Originally, any ceremonially clean person could administer the cleansing for the one needing purification. No priest or Levite was required. The ashes of the sacrificed red heifer that were needed for the process had been separated into three parts. One-third remained in the temple-terrace (the *Chel*), one-third was stored on the Mount of Olives, and one-third was divided and dispersed among the priesthood throughout Israel for use in the ritual of purification.[3] Therefore, per God's original law, the people, places, or vessels could be purified where they were.[4]

Jewish tradition had added the burden of travel to Jerusalem and the cost to stay in the area for a week, as the person needing purified were required to be cleansed in the Temple. Traditions had also added complexity to the Rite of Purification. It became a requirement that only authorized people were permitted to administer the rite. A priest was not necessary. Rather, "pure" children were used for the task of sprinkling the water of purification.[5]

The definition of what defiled a person had also become very broad. Many Jews would have regarded themselves as needing this purification just in case, as defilement by the expanded rules was so easy in their understanding as to be almost unavoidable.[6]

When people came to the Temple to be sprinkled on the third day of the purification process, it was 10 Nisan. This date was four days before Passover, the date a family's lamb had to be obtained and kept within their home until its sacrifice.

The laws God established, as they had been interpreted and expanded, obviously represented an opportunity for a booming business. It became custom that lambs were available for purchase from the priests on the temple grounds[7] when the people came for their first sprinkling on 10 *Nisan*. Lambs obtained from the temple would appear to have the "seal of approval" of the priests as acceptable for sacrifice.

There was also a large fee attached to receiving the rite of purification as the red heifer used to produce the ashes was rare and therefore expensive.[8] Yet records indicate such a sacrifice had only happened either seven or nine times in the history of Israel.[9] What God had instructed for the spiritual well-being of the people and as a lesson through demonstration had become a money-making endeavor.

On 14 *Nisan*, those being purified were required to receive a second sprinkling of water. Then those who were purified were required to wash themselves and their clothes (Numbers 19:14-19).[10] At that point they would be clean for the evening Passover meal and permitted to participate.[11]

Perhaps it was just coincidence: that the religious leaders had expanded those needing purification from a few to many people; and that those people could not be purified anywhere but the Temple area after paying a large fee; and that the priests did not even have to do the work; and that on the first day of sprinkling they had lambs for sale where the people were required to be to be allowed to receive the Passover meal which was required to maintain citizenship.

Many of those traveling a distance for the Feast of Unleavened Bread would have wanted to find a place to stay in or near Jerusalem for the week of purification before the Passover season. The short trip to Jerusalem for the sprinkling of purification would reduce the fear of a new defilement on a long journey. It is also probable there were some who came to Bethlehem for a day or two to take care of the census and then moved on to Jerusalem to stay for the remainder of the week of purification. Both these groups of people filled Bethlehem to capacity beginning around 7 *Nisan*, April 13 of 5 B.C., and for at least a few days.

A friend suggested a theory why the couple would not have arrived weeks before the crowds. It answered the question of how the couple could have honored Mary's likely preference for late travel and honored Joseph's understandable desire to have someone there in case labor began early. This theory also explains why they did not arrive in Bethlehem until 7 *Nisan*, or shortly before. Mary's cousin Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judea, probably Ein Karem, mentioned in chapter 2. Elizabeth and her five-to-six-month-old son were only a couple of miles away from Bethlehem. What woman would not want to visit her cousin, see a new baby, and talk to someone who related to everything she was experiencing in pregnancy?

Of course, Mary would have wanted to make a visit to see Elizabeth and her baby boy and stay a week or two. Such a visit would have been appropriate and welcomed by Elizabeth and her husband who understood the immense privilege of having these particular house guests. The young couple could have stayed with Mary's side of the family for a while and then made the few-mile trip in the warmth of a nice day without fear of a delivery during the short trip to Bethlehem. The couple arrived and planned to stay in Bethlehem through the time of the birth and several weeks longer, as will be discussed.

One might ask, “Why not make the census trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem after the birth if Joseph had until October 1 of 5 B.C. to make the family’s report?” There are several logical reasons. The last of which would have cinched the decision.

Maybe the family wanted a fresh start in their ancestral area. Joseph was legally allowed to take Mary into his bedchamber and consummate the marriage as soon as they were engaged, with his father’s approval of their new residence, if he were alive. Yet if they remained in Nazareth, the local gossipers might count the months before the birth and question their quick marriage.

Another factor is that, as difficult as travel is with a pregnant wife, it is even more challenging with a newborn. If they were going to have to travel with a newborn baby, it was not going to be a round trip from Nazareth. It was only going to be back to Nazareth in warmer weather.

Additionally, it would have been stressful to make a trip with a baby while worrying about both a government deadline and the requirement for Mary’s purification sacrifice in the Temple 42 days after the birth (Leviticus 12:1-8) and the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) just a short time later.

As a devout Jew, Joseph would not have missed any of the three feasts requiring attendance in Jerusalem. There is no way a man would leave his wife behind for a birth if he could help it. Besides, Scripture says, although not required to attend as a woman, it was Mary’s custom to attend the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with its Passover meal (Luke 2:41). Therefore, it makes perfect sense they would have timed their trip to be in Bethlehem for the census and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then they planned to stay in the area for their other religious obligations all the way through the Feast of Weeks.

Ultimately, all of Mary and Joseph's reasoning aside, it is entirely possible the timing of the trip was directed by the knowledge of Who their Son was and what the prophecies said, along with the moving of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts. They needed to be in Bethlehem for the birth.

The Heavenly Father had reasons for the couple's trip to Bethlehem together before the birth. Prophecy said His Son was to be born in Bethlehem. The Heavenly Father also knew there were shepherds to meet, wise men to greet, and another trip further south to Egypt.

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In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

> *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. (Luke 2: 8-20)

The Time of Year Shepherds Would Have Watched Flocks Near Bethlehem

Jesus Christ was born during a time when shepherds were watching their flocks by night out in the open fields. Shepherds generally watched their flocks in the area around Bethlehem only between the months of March or April through October. The other months were too cold and wet for this practice. There was one exception to this rule. The flocks used for temple sacrifice would be kept in the vicinity of Bethlehem year-round.[12] The presence of these temple flocks means flocks on the hillside cannot be used as a limiting factor for the time of Christ's birth.

Yet one could argue, even if they were on the hillsides during the day when weather permitted, it does not mean a good shepherd would have allowed them to stay out in the colder night air of winter. What is described in Scripture sounds much more like the spring birthing season than another time of year. One interesting piece of information can be added concerning the flocks kept nearby. Alfred Edersheim, expert on ancient Jewish culture and customs as well as respected Jewish and early Christian historian, wrote:

> Jewish tradition may here prove both illustrative and helpful. That the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, was a settled conviction. Equally so was the belief, that He was to be revealed from

> *Migdal Eder*, "the tower of the flock." This *Migdal Eder* was not the watch-tower for the ordinary flocks which pastured on the barren sheep-ground beyond Bethlehem, but lay close to the town, on the road to Jerusalem. A passage in the *Mishnah* leads to the conclusion, that the flocks, which pastured there, were destined for Temple-sacrifices, and, accordingly, that the shepherds, who watch over them, were not ordinary shepherds.[13]

It is a fascinating possibility that the shepherds invited to see Christ at His birth could very well have been among the ones who evaluated the lambs and decided if they were worthy to be presented for sacrifice. The Holy Spirit could have used their testimony of the night of the birth as the indicator to Simeon and Anna as to when they should be on the lookout for the Christ child in the Temple. As will be shown, they would have known the Messiah's mother would be required to present herself in the Temple to complete her purification on the 42nd day after the birth as required (Leviticus 12:1-8).[14]

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And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called Holy to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:21-24)

The Period the Family Stayed in Bethlehem

Joseph, Mary and the Baby remained in Bethlehem for a period of several weeks. They stayed there for four reasons, although they could only have anticipated and planned for three of them: the circumcision of Jesus Christ; participating in "substitute" Passover; and Mary's purification obligations. The fourth, a visit by the magi, was likely quite the surprise!

The Circumcision

Jesus Christ was circumcised on the eighth day after His birth as the law required. The day mattered for any Jewish male, but in the case of Jesus, the date of His circumcision resulted in multiple messages from God related to who He was and His work. These will be examined in the chapter, "Evaluating The Dating and Their Theological Implications."

While the day was mandatory, the place was not dictated by the law. It did not have to take place in the temple. In this case, it probably happened in Bethlehem or the home of their relative Zacharias, the priest.

Substitute Passover One Month Later

Although not required like the men to participate in the three major festivals including Passover, women and even children would often attend (I Samuel 1:3-7).[15] Women were not required to participate in religious obligations tied to specific dates due to menstruation, since, due to no fault of their own, they would be forbidden to participate.[16] They were even forbidden from participating in the Passover meal if they were menstruating.[17] Likewise, they were banned from entering the temple grounds during their monthly menstruation cycle.[18]

Under the law of Moses, childbirth was equivalent to menstruation in making a woman ceremonially unclean for seven days (Leviticus 12:2).[19] Like menstruation, childbirth would have prevented a woman from participating in the Passover meal and also the rite of purification from the dead.[20] Therefore, Mary would have been forbidden from participating in the Passover meal in the month of *Nisan* as she was considered unclean due to the birth. The law of Moses would also forbid her from touching anything Holy or to participate in "substitute Passover" until her purification was complete on the 42nd day after birth of a son, or longer for the birth of a daughter (Leviticus 12:4-5).

While Mary was excused from Passover, Joseph was not, even though it would have been very hard for Joseph to have kept himself ceremonially "clean" and eligible to participate in Passover under the circumstances of Christ's birth (Leviticus 15:19-24). After the birth, just touching Mary, her bed, or anything she sat upon would make him unclean until the evening. Joseph knew the birth would make it almost impossible to be "clean" for the Passover of *Nisan* in 5 B.C.

If a Jewish man could not get to Jerusalem, or for some other reason was unable to participate in the regular Passover in *Nisan*, God provided that they could do so the following month. This provision allowed a Jew to maintain good standing with God and to remain within the Jewish community (Numbers 9:9-12). Therefore, it is logical Joseph planned all along to fulfill the Passover requirement the next month. Joseph would have fulfilled his Passover requirement on May 21, 5 B.C.

Mary's Purification and Required Sacrifices

After circumcision, Mary would have had to wait another 33 days. After that period, on the 42nd day after the birth, she would be required to make her sacrifice in the Temple

as her "days for purification" from childbirth had been completed.[21] There was actually a requirement for two sacrifices. One sacrifice was either a lamb or two birds for her (Leviticus 12:6). The other sacrifice was five silver shekels to redeem a first-born child (Numbers 18:15-16).

Scripture says at this time Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24). Would it not have made sense to wait in Bethlehem during the 41-day purification period since Jerusalem was so close? After her purification period and her sacrifice on the 42nd day (Leviticus 12:3-4), May 26, 5 B.C., they could have traveled to Nazareth in Galilee after the Sabbath, which began that evening. However, if they had chosen to make this trip, they would have arrived with just enough time to turn around and return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks, also called Pentecost, June 11, 5 B.C. An extra round trip to Jerusalem would have been painful, unhealthy, potentially dangerous, and clearly unwise. Logically, after the short trip to Jerusalem to present their sacrifices in the Temple, they made the five-mile trip south, back to Bethlehem, and planned to stay there until Pentecost on June 11th.

Matthew 2:11 establishes Joseph and Mary stayed in Bethlehem for several weeks because when the magi arrived in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were residing there in a "house" ("oikia" SGW #3714). It was clearly their plan to stay in Bethlehem and accomplish several legal requirements with one trip. For more on the "inn" and their housing arrangements read the appendix entitled, "**Where Mary Gave Birth**."

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The remainder of Luke 2 will not be evaluated closely in this book as the next chapter of this work jumps ahead to Luke 3. Nevertheless, on a personal note, Luke 2:25-38,

tells the story of two cherished Bible characters, Simeon and Anna, who were apparently advanced in years, devout in their faith, and led by the Holy Spirit. They were given special privileges by God to see and recognize the Messiah and to prophesy over Him. (Their life testimonies have been so precious to us that my wife and I named two of our children after them.)

Yet one question is troubling. Since the shepherds told everyone they could about the visit of the angels and the birth of Christ, wouldn't many people know the date the mother, and most likely with the Baby, would be in the Temple? Why were there not many people waiting and watching, hoping to see Messiah? Perhaps the answer is found in man's willingness to believe. One only looks for what they believe can be found and sometimes can only see what they think is possible.

The next Scripture verses, Luke 2:39-51, comment on the development of Jesus as a child and tell a story of His childhood. Jewish males 13 years and older were required to go to Jerusalem for Passover. Custom dictated that one, or even two years, before a male turned 13 years old, he would go to Jerusalem and participate in Passover as well as participate in religious fasting.[22] Luke is careful to point out that Christ's family honored this custom as they brought Him to Jerusalem when he was 12 years old.

Luke 3:1-3 reverts to pinning down some information pertinent to the chronology of Christ's work. For in these verses, the start of the ministry of John the Baptist is timestamped.

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Chapter 6 Summary

Due to its proximity to Jerusalem, pilgrims traveling to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, along with those arriving for the census, would have filled the available space for visitors in Bethlehem.

The shepherds could have been in the fields to receive a visit by angels as spring had arrived in the region. It is also possible the shepherds were in the fields near Bethlehem because they were the caretakers of the temple flocks. These men would have been in that area year-round. The evidence implies both springtime and the possibility the shepherds were caretakers for the temple flocks.

The evidence contained in this chapter supports that Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem on or shortly before 7 *Nisan*, probably during April 13, 5 B.C. Yet and quite ironically, the two popular evidences of the timing of Christ's birth: the shepherds, and the crowding in Bethlehem, do not actually point definitively to the date of His birth, as Bethlehem would have also been crowded for other feasts as well during the census year.

After the birth, the couple stayed in Bethlehem so Joseph could partake of Passover on its makeup date a month later and beyond since they had to make a sacrifice to complete Mary's purification on May 26, 5 B.C. Further, they stayed in Bethlehem because the Feast of Weeks was only 16 days away on June 11, 5 B.C. Since Joseph and family returned to nearby Bethlehem after Mary's purification from birth, they were residing in a house there when the magi arrived.

A Lesson from our Heavenly Father and My Father

I remember my father, Rev. Ronald I. Glassman, preaching that keeping the lamb with the family for four days, as required by God, served two important purposes. It allowed the lamb to be observed to make sure it was not sick or imperfect in any way before it was used in the sacrifice – it had to be without blemish. My father also pointed out, as the family fed and cared for the lamb for those days it became more than simply an object in their minds. During those days, especially children, would come to have feelings for the lamb. My father said, the requirement to care for the lamb was not a cruelty on the part of God. Rather, it was a lesson. Sin results in loss, pain, and death. It was and is important for people to realize this fact. The sooner one learns this truth, the better the decisions of their lives will be.

Chapter 7
Luke's Date Stamp (Luke 3:1-3 and Luke 3:23-38)

The Men in Office Listed in Luke 3:1-2 Point to John the Baptist's Ministry Starting in A.D. 26

The Meaning of "Jesus Was about Thirty Years of Age"

Lessons From Luke's Genealogy of Jesus

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Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; (Luke 3:1-3)

The Men in Office Listed in Luke 3:1-2 Point to John the Baptist's Ministry Starting in A.D. 26

One might ask: "Why didn't Luke just provide a calendar date for the start of the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ?" Actually, that is exactly what he did. From the reign of the earliest Israelite kings until well into the early Christian era, time was marked by the beginning and ending of the reign of officials. This system avoided what would have been great confusion because many different calendars were used. During the early first century in Israel alone there were various groups of people who used a total of five different calendar dating systems based upon their political or religious preference.[1]

Since John the Baptist was not only a Levite but a descendant of Aaron, some might look to regulations for priests and Levites for insight as to his age at the start of his ministry. Numbers 4:1-3 says Levites of the family of Kohath in active service must be between 30-50 years of age. The men of this family were given the task of handling the internal parts and objects of the tabernacle. Numbers 8:24-25 says other Levites were permitted to serve from 25-50 years of age.

This variance is not a contradiction; there was apparently a higher standard for the more sacred objects. At this time, the Levites had numerous menial tasks to perform, including carrying other parts of the tabernacle, work more suitable for younger backs.

King David, demonstrating his love for God and passionate desire to worship Him, used his last words to expand the age of service and to specify the duties of the Levites within the yet to be built first Temple. “For by the last words of David, the sons of Levi *were* counted from twenty years old and upward.” (I Chronicles 23:27). I Chronicles 23:2-6 records that the Levites over 30 years of age were assigned duties of overseeing and higher status; verse 24 instructs that Levites who were at least 20 years of age were to be added to the labor force of the Temple for other necessary duties.

The second Temple was constructed after Israel was returned by God’s mercy from captivity in what had become the Persian Empire. Ezra 3:8 records that the Levites 20 years of age and older were permitted to do labor and supervise at that time. These passages do not conflict with each other. They make perfect sense.

Regarding the first Temple, the adjustments to age limits simply expanded the workforce to include younger men who were better suited to do hard, physical tasks, while reserving the leadership roles for older men. In the case of the second Temple’s construction, vastly fewer men were

available for the work after the return from exile. This fact necessitated that even younger men were given supervisory duties.

The verses about the legal work age of Levites provide context for John the Baptist's age at the start of his ministry. Scripture does not specifically say priests had to be 20, 25, or 30 years of age to serve. Nevertheless, since being a priest was a higher office than just a man being a Levite, one could assume they would have had the same or higher requirements as those of a Levite.[2]

John the Baptist was the son of a priest and therefore was to be a priest. Calculating John the Baptist's conception, and assuming a perfect 266-day gestation period, John the Baptist's 30th birthday was between October 23 - 25, 25 A.D. This period was a few months before his ministry began early in A.D. 26. Therefore, God's timing was such that John did not start his ministry until he was 30 years old, which honored tradition. More importantly, God arranged the timing of events to accommodate the start of Christ's public ministry after His thirtieth birthday. John the Baptist's ministry did not stand alone. He was simply the "way-maker" for the work of Christ.

Based upon the timing offered by the leadership of the men listed in Luke 3:1-2, John the Baptist waited until after January 1, (or 16th), A.D. 26 to begin his ministry. New Roman officials, including Pontius Pilate, began their terms after the first of the year based upon the calendar used in Rome, January 1st. Luke 3:1 records Pilate was already in office at the start of John the Baptist's ministry, and Pilate began to rule in A.D. 26. Pilate's tenure will be discussed in more depth shortly. January 16th of A.D. 26 is mentioned because it is the latest of three possible dates related to Tiberius' reign which could identify the timing of the start of John the Baptist's ministry.

Although the first date of John the Baptist's ministry is not documented, he could have begun in early-mid

January based upon Luke 3:1-2. This date might sound very early in the year and suggest water being too cold for baptism. Yet John's work was along and in the midst of the Jordan River. The Jordan River Valley has an elevation several hundred feet below sea level. Hence, the air temperature would have been at least in the high 60's Fahrenheit year-round. The water being cold was acceptable in such an environment. Baptizing in cold running water became the tradition. A teaching in the Didache (the teaching of the twelve apostles) from the second century says the preference for baptism was cold running water.[3]

Scripture does not say God called John the Baptist to begin at exactly 30 years of age or in any particular month, only that a list of seven leaders were in power when he started his ministry. The information below discusses each figure listed in Luke 3:1-2 showing these leaders would have been in office in early A.D. 26.

Tiberius Caesar

Luke 3:1 says, "The fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar." Identifying this year sounds easy. Simply put, John the Baptist's ministry must have started after the completion of Tiberius Caesar's 14th year of reign and before his 16th year began. The issue is, when did he begin his reign? There are some who would say Tiberius' reign should be dated from the passing of Caesar Augustus, because they do not recognize a period of co-regency. When considering the historical context, this position cannot be well defended. One might not choose to date Tiberius' reign to begin with his ruling alongside his adopted father, Augustus, but such a co-regency clearly did exist. There are therefore two possible dates and general periods to consider: the date of Augustus' death when Tiberius no longer reigned along with him, or when Tiberius began to have the authority of an emperor.

If one chooses to date Tiberius' reign as beginning with Augustus' death, there are again two possibilities: accept the date of Augustus' death, August 19, A.D. 14, as its inception, or when Tiberius allowed the Senate to formally recognize him as head of state, September 17, A.D. 14.[4] Either of these positions results in the conclusion the 14th year of Tiberius' reign was completed in late summer or fall of A.D. 29. Many contemporary theologians support a date based upon one of these choices associated with Augustus' death. This incorrect conclusion is driven by bias to current norms instead of the reality of the period.

Perhaps there are rare exceptions, but for hundreds of years, governments of the world have been led by one person at a time. This circumstance drives the assumption the reign of a Roman emperor began when the last emperor died. However, during the centuries before the time of Christ's ministry, as well as for a significant period following, this was not the case with Roman governance. The sharing of power with an heir was also not unheard of in other kingdoms of the period. The existence of co-regencies is supported in the following passage:

> … among Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, the Israelites of old, and the Parthians of that very day; the association of the children of the reigning monarchs in the empire, with their fathers, was no new or unexampled occurrence.[5]

The legions that drafted General Vespasian to oppose Vitellius for the emperorship did so because they also liked and respected his son Titus. Josephus records the sentiment of Vespasian's soldiers saying:

> … for that neither will the Roman senate, nor people, bear such a lascivious emperor as Vitellius, if he be compared with their chaste Vespasian; nor will they endure a most barbarous tyrant, instead of a good governor,

> nor choose one that hath no child, to preside over them, instead of him that is a father; because the advancement of men's own children to dignities is certainly the greatest security kings can have for themselves. Whether, therefore, we estimate the capacity of governing from the skill of a person in years, we ought to have Vespasian, - or whether from the strength of a young man, we ought to have Titus [Vespasian's son]; for by this means we shall have the advantage of both their ages.[6]

It was not uncommon for two or three people at a time to rule the Roman Empire. These leaders were generals, powerful public officials, or parents and their descendants.

There are numerous coins that have two concurrent Roman rulers inscribed. Vespasian and Titus are recognized on many coins as ruling together in a co-regency. Vespasian is recognized with the title of being supreme, "augustus." At the same time, Titus is also proclaimed as having undisputed absolute powers as well through his having "*tribunician* power." Caesar Augustus and Tiberius Caesar had such a co-regency which began in late A.D. 11 or early January A.D. 12.

Some scholars point to coins minted in the Syrian region to refute Tiberius' reign beginning before A.D. 14. The coins commemorate the 45th year of Augustus' victory at Actium on September 2, 31 B.C. by marking that year along with having an "A" meaning "1" to mark a special point in the rule of Tiberius. In fact, it marks the beginning of his rulership as the new "augustus" or supreme leader after two years of reigning as co-regent. Understood in context, the Actium coins do not conflict with the dating presented in this text. Confusion regarding the meaning of the Actium era coins has resulted from the work of some who misunderstand the coin record and comments made by numismatist Josepho Eckhel.[7] The

Actium coins are discussed in more detail in the appendix, "**Of Titles and Coins**."

Some doggedly disregard the existence of the co-regency or say it does not matter. For them, what matters is when Tiberius was reigning as the one and only emperor, otherwise they assert his reign had not begun. There is a problem with their position. If one says Tiberius was not emperor if he was not sole emperor, then Tiberius' reign does not begin until long after A.D. 14.

After Augustus' death, according to the dictates of his will, Augustus' wife reigned with Tiberius. Augustus' wife was named Livia Drusilla. After Augustus' death in A.D. 14, her name became Julia Augustus as she was formally adopted into the Julian royal family. This woman is referred to as both Julia and Livia by various historians and writers. Therefore, this text will refer to her as Julia/Livia so she will not be confused with others.

Julia/Livia's had a one-third "share of the power." At times, her lesser share was exercised as though it was much more, as noted by ancient Roman historians Dio and Suetonious.[8] If one makes the argument Tiberius must have all the power or he is not really ruler, then it must be asserted he did not reign until after Julia/Livia's death in A.D. 29.[9] No historian makes that suggestion.

Therefore, the second choice of a date for the beginning of Tiberius' reign is when his co-regency afforded him the authority of an emperor. As a co-regent Tiberius could - and did - act just as Augustus did, although Tiberius would not have obtained the title of "augustus" until his father Augustus (Octavian) died. See the appendix titled, "**Of Titles and Coins**" for a definition of the word "augustus" as a title.

Since the issue at hand is when the Gospel writer, Luke, would have regarded Tiberius' reign to have begun, the beginning of his authority as co-regent and becoming

supreme ruler over Israel, is clearly the correct choice. Ancient Roman historians also regarded Tiberius' reign to have begun at this point. Although there is accurate documentation of when the co-regency began, it is nevertheless the subject of debate. For those with an interest in Roman history, or who wish to see more evidence, the defensible positions for the inception of Tiberius' reign are presented in the appendix to this book entitled, "**The Dating of Tiberius' Co-Regency**."

The following is a summary of the facts leading up to and culminating with the co-regency of Tiberius. Although several of these items are disputed, each is supported by ancient historians who assert:

1) The war in Pannonia led by Tiberius ended after June of A.D. 9, making Tiberius available to handle the next military crisis.

2) Tiberius left for the war in Germania very soon after receiving word of the slaughter of three legions under Varus, which occurred in August/September A.D. 9.

3) Tiberius returned to Rome from Germania for the *Tribunal* of Bato, which occurred along with Tiberius' *ovation* on January 16, A.D. 10.

4) Tiberius was in Germania for a total of two years.

5) At the request of Augustus, the Senate made a decree, *before* Tiberius' return to Rome in the fall of A.D. 11, that Tiberius be given equal power with Augustus.

6) The date of the decree appears to be August 25, A.D. 10 that can be deduced from a record provided by Clement of Alexandria.[10] Although this date is almost certainly the date of the Senate's decree of intent, it does not equate to the inception of Tiberius' reign over the provinces.

7) Tiberius returned from Germania sometime after September 23, A.D. 11. He rode in his *triumphalia* soon after his return. Fragments of a Roman calendar record Tiberius' *triumphalia* occurred on October 23. This event had the trappings of what could be considered an inaugural celebration.

8) If his co-regency did not begin with the decree (which only a few historians support), and if it did not begin with the *triumphalia*, then it certainly began shortly thereafter when the Senate passed a law between October 24 A.D. 11 and January 16, A.D. 12. This law specified some of Tiberius' duties alongside Augustus, including direct control over the Imperial provinces that included the Syrian Province containing Judea.

Augustus directed these events to ensure succession per his will. Through his strategy, Augustus protected both Tiberius' power and his beloved wife's influence and prestige beyond his death.

Beyond the bounds of the city of Rome, which Augustus reserved for himself, Tiberius was clearly in charge. The Senate, no doubt with Augustus' direction, specifically gave Tiberius control over at least the Imperial Provinces, such as the Syrian Province. In addition, he had at least indirect control over the Senatorial Provinces from at least the passing of the Senate's law by January 16, A.D. 12. Based upon the co-regency, the 15th year of Tiberius' reign was almost entirely within A.D. 26.[11]

It is most logical Luke regarded the beginning of Tiberius' co-regency with Augustus as being when the law was passed. However, if instead of actual dating, Luke used the Roman customs of regnal nonaccession-year dating (dating the reigns of rulers from the beginning of the year a ruler took office) and deferred to dating within a region (the fall calendar dating within the Syrian region), he would have accepted Tiberius' reign to have begun 1 *Tishrei*, or September 17, A.D. 11. This conclusion would still support the beginning of the work of John the Baptist and Christ in A.D. 26. (For further details on the Roman dating of Tiberius' co-regency see appendix "**Of Titles and Coins**" For a closer look at the Jewish perspective on the beginning of the reign of rulers see "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**.")

Early church father and historian, Clement of Alexandria, understood Luke's recognition of the co-regency as marking the inception of Tiberius' reign and held reflected the same position in *Stromata* 1, 21 with the interesting phrase: "In the fifteen years of Tiberius and fifteen years of Augustus" (counting the years they ruled together), in reference to the year Christ began His ministry. Granted, the English translation of Clement's writing may not be clear. Nevertheless, it seems obvious Clement is suggesting that the start of the count of Tiberius' reign was with his co-regency with Augustus.

Luke was again completely accurate. His accuracy is clearer in the Greek language, in which his Gospel was written, than is reflected in the English language. As Luke did with Quirinius's positions, here again regarding Tiberius he is careful to use the correct word. Luke makes the best choice of three Greek words that would be translated into the English word "ruler." He used *hēgĕmōn* (SGW #2232). This word does not imply one and only one ruler, but "a ruler."

Luke did not use the more specific term *basilĕus* (SGW #935) passed down from Greek tradition which means

"king" or "emperor" and was used for the Roman Emperor.[12] This term could imply one leader. Luke avoided the use of this word. He also avoided using another word implying one leader, the term *monarchia*, which means a monarch (from *monos* = alone + *archia* = ruler or leader).

Luke pointed toward the co-regency by the words he chose not to use, as much as through the word he did use, *hēgĕmōn.* He picked the word which could mean more than one ruler, thus recognizing the co-regency as part of Tiberius' reign. Luke's word choice proves he was consistent with Roman custom which recognized Tiberius authority as co-regent alongside Augustus, particularly having authority over the province which would have mattered to the Jewish people. It was the perspective reflected in his Gospel.[13]

Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea

Pontius Pilate served as political governor of Judea from A.D. 26 - 36.[14] As stated, Roman political appointments generally started with the beginning of the Julian year, January 1. Yet one may ask, "Is there corroborative information verifying Pilate's rulership of Judea beginning in January? Providence has provided an answer where normally assumption would be necessary.

During Pilate's first year as governor, he made a cultural and political offense so egregious it received sections in two of Josephus' major works: *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Wars of the Jews*.[15] Pilate's actions were probably calculated to gain the favor of his direct superior, rabid anti-Semite Sejanus.

Upon taking command, Pilate ordered the Roman garrison to move from Caesarea to Jerusalem and to take their ensigns with them for prominent display. These ensigns, including the image of Caesar, were then set up at the

entrance to the city. This act was regarded as rank idolatry by the Jews. Pilate's action resulted in a prolonged protest that had the potential of resulting in the massacre of a large number of Pilate's new subjects. Pilate was quite willing to risk inciting revolt. Killing some rebellious Jews would have pleased Sejanus who desired their extermination. Evidence of Pilate's intentions and the hatred of Sejanus toward the Jews are offered in the appendix, "**Of Titles and Coins**."

Chronologically fortunate, the record contains the detail that this movement of troops occurred because Pilate wanted the troops to "take their winter quarters" in Jerusalem.[16] Pilate's command means he moved them in before the winter of his first year had passed. Thus, he had already begun his reign at that point, so it is safe to say he began his reign in Judea on the customary date of January 1st of A.D. 26.

Getting What He Deserved

Although Pilate's end is debated, some evidence suggests he met an appropriate fate. Pilate's friend and patron, Sejanus, fell from power and was executed on October 18, A.D. 31. Then, in A.D. 36, Caligula, who was apparently exercising authority as Tiberius was approaching death, heard charges of Pilate's brutal attack against the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim. In response to this charge, or using it as an excuse to get rid of an ally of his dead enemy, Caligula ordered Pilate to commit suicide for the charge he "executed men without proper trial."[17] Pilate's death is, therefore, either quite ironic or the judgment of God, or both!

Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee

Tetrarch simply means "ruler of a quarter." According to evidence on ancient coins, Herod Antipas reigned as tetrarch over the region of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. His reign ended when he was ordered into exile for attempting "to make the courtesy title of 'king' into a real title."[18] He is infamous for his lasciviousness and for marrying Herodias, who had been the wife of his half-brother, Herod II (who many believe had the middle name Philip, not to be confused with the tetrarch named Philip who was another half-brother). Herod Antipas' transgression of marrying his sister-in-law earned the condemnation of John the Baptist, resulting in John's arrest and execution (Matthew 14:1-12, Mark 6:17-29, and Luke 3:19-20).

Philip, Tetrarch of the Region of Ituraea and Trachonitis

Philip ruled the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34.[19] He was the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem.[20] Philip the Tetrarch married Salome, who is infamous for the provocative dance she performed for Philip's half-brother, Herod Antipas, as well as her gruesome request for John the Baptist's head on a platter.[21] The marriage of Salome and Philip produced no offspring.[22]

Upon Philip's death, Tiberius incorporated his tetrarchy into the territory of Syria. Emperor Caligula later gave Philip's old region to Agrippa to rule. Agrippa was the brother of Herodias.[23]

Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene

Critics have challenged Luke's accuracy regarding Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene. Some dispute when he lived. Others dispute his reign or even his very existence.

There is confusion about this man because Josephus mentions another man by the same name who was the son of Ptolemy.[24] Josephus does not assert this person is the same man. The first Lysanias could not have been the tetrarch since he lived 60 years before the tetrarch's reign. Josephus points out this first Lysanias who governed Chalcis was executed by Cleopatra of Egypt in 36 B.C., decades before the period referenced in Luke's Gospel.[25]

For perspective, the four tetrarchies were not even set up until after the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C. which was over 30 years after the death of this first man named Lysanias to whom Josephus refers.[26] He is clearly not the same man as the Lysanias who was the Tetrarch of Abilene. Josephus recorded that after Lysanias the tetrarch's death, Emperor Caligula promised the territory of Abila (Abilene) to Agrippa.[27] This commitment by Caligula was some 20 years after the time John the Baptist started his ministry, referenced in Luke's Gospel. Emperor Claudius eventually made good on Caligula's promise.[28]

History records that during Lysanias' reign, an inscription was made in a Doric temple in Abila, although the city is referred to by its ancient name Nebi Abel. The temple engraving verifies Lysanias was the tetrarch of the area very likely until his death. Interestingly, the inscription honors the "Au[gust] lords."[29] Scholars believe this inscription likely refers to Tiberius' co-regency with his mother Julia/Livia from A.D. 14-29 and was made during that period. Thus, the inscription also authenticates the existence and recognition of co-regencies and their joint authority during the period. A coin has also been found that verifies Lysanias was Tetrarch of Abilene.[30]

Small Place, but Big Deal

One might ask, "Why did Luke mention Lysanias, a fairly obscure ruler over a small area?" Luke was listing the religious leaders and governmental authorities in power when and where Christ's ministry occurred. Abilene is a small area on the western slopes of Mount Hermon that included the town of Panias referred to in Scripture as Caesarea Philippi.[31] The town was named after the Greek god Pan, whose supposed physical characteristics became attached to those associated with the devil.[32]

Caesarea Philippi was known to have many idols.[33] These idols provided the backdrop for an important conversation. It is in the area of this town where Jesus Christ confronts His disciples with the questions: "Whom do men say that I am?" and "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13-15 and Mark 8:27-29).

Several days after being given the correct answer by Peter, Christ ascends the adjacent mountain, Mount Hermon, where the Transfiguration occurred. Due to this conversation and the Transfiguration, the area played a key part in Christ's teaching of the disciples and the founding of the Church on the correct understanding of who He was.

Both Annas and Caiaphas Called by the Title High Priest

Quirinius appointed Annas as high priest during his second reign as political governor of Syria, which was A.D. 6-11.[34] After Annas and a few successors were removed from office, Caiaphas was appointed by Roman Governor Valerius Gratus in A.D. 18. Caiaphas continued as high priest until he was removed by Lucius Vitellius, Governor of Syria, during the Passover season of A.D. 37.[35]

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas.[36] Owing to the respect Jews show their elders or perhaps to the office they had previously held, it should not be surprising that Jews, including Caiaphas himself, would have recognized Annas with the title of the position he once held.[37] Once a man was high priest, he carried that title the rest of his life unless gross misconduct occurred.

From a political standpoint there was only one high priest at a time. Yet from the perspective of Jewish protocol there were many who would have been referred to as being a "high priest" or "chief priest." The Greek word used in Scripture was *archiĕrĕus* (SGW #749). This word means: "chief", "high", or more commonly "great."

In addition to the political-religious office of high priest, those who held the following offices also were referred to as chief or high priests: commander of the Temple guard, the steward of the Temple, and the three concurrent Temple treasurers.[38] The New Testament writers shared this perspective of recognizing several people at a time as high or chief priests based both on their current or past offices.[39] In his book, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* published in 1969, Joachim Jeremias goes into detail regarding this situation and the traditions related to the high priesthood.

It is not surprising Luke recognized both Annas and Caiaphas with the title of "high priest." It is clear both Annas and Caiaphas had the title before John the Baptist began his ministry, and they were both alive throughout the ministry of Christ. Based upon the limitations imposed by the reigns of the leaders mentioned in Luke 3:1-2, the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry was between January 1 (or 16th latest date of Senate law for Tiberius' co-regency), A.D. 26 and January 16, A.D. 27. John's Gospel narrows the period of the start of John the Baptist's ministry when it describes the baptism of Christ and the timing of the early events of Jesus' ministry,

analyzed in chapter 14. John's work began sufficiently before Christ's baptism in late February A.D. 26 for crowds to gather as they had.

Politics Interfering in Religion

The position of "high priest" was regularly used as a means of graft as Roman officials demanded bribes to obtain this position. Josephus describes the political intrigue related to Annas and Caiaphas in *Antiquities of the Jews, 18, 2, 2*. Historian Josef Blinzler says,

> The Roman procurators liked to have plenty of changes in this office because they exploited the appointment of a new holder of the office to obtain money gifts from the successful candidate. This disedifying fact is actually recorded in the Talmud (Joma [or Yoma] 8b): "And as the candidate paid money in order to become high priest, they (the procurators) were in the habit of depriving the high priest of office every twelve months." Valerius Gratus, governor of Judea from 15-26 A.D., through whom Caiphas came into office, must also have been susceptible to bribery, for he left none of the three immediate predecessors of Caiphas in office longer than a year (*Antiquities* [*of the Jews*] *18, 2, 2 at 34 f.*).[40]

It is particularly distasteful that the regard for money was not even hidden. The Talmud contains references to money buying positions among the priests.[41] *Pesachim* 57*a* mentions priests using their power to steal from other priests. *Tosefta Yoma 1* teaches the high priest must be the richest of the priests.[42] Not surprisingly, due to the financial reward of gouging the buyer of sacrificial animals, Annas made sure those who handled the trade were principally family members.[43]

Ruler's Earliest Date of Reign	Ruler's Latest Date of Reign
Tiberius Caesar 15th Year	
(regnal)	
1 *Tishrei*, Sept. 11, A.D. 25	29 *Elul*, Sept. 29, A.D. 26
(or based upon the date of the *triumphalia*)	
Oct. 23, A.D. 25	Oct. 22, A.D. 26
(or the latest possible date based on the Senate law) *	
Jan. 16, A.D. 26	Jan. 16, A.D. 27
Pontius Pilate	
January 1, A.D. 26	A.D. 36
Herod Antipas	
4 B.C.	A.D. 39
Philip, Tetrarch of the Region of Ituraea and Trachonitis	
4 B.C.	A.D. 34
Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene	
20 B.C.	A.D. 32
Annas, High Priest	
A.D. 6	A.D. 40
Caiaphas, High Priest	
A.D. 18	A.D. 37

* The Senate law was passed after the *triumphalia* but before January 16 of A.D. 26.

Again, being born in late October of 6 B.C. John the Baptist would have turned thirty in A.D. 25. God's timing allowed John's priestly heritage to be honored as he was thirty years of age before he began his ministry.

The convergence of the reigns of these several leaders defines a very specific, verifiable time-period. Luke was declaring John the Baptist began his ministry in A.D. 26. This information fits the Biblical narrative and the dating of this book.

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When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, ... (Luke 3:23a)

The Meaning of "Jesus Was about Thirty Years of Age"

Some have suggested that "about thirty years of age" could have meant from 25-34 years of age, suggesting Luke could not be more precise than a 10-year span. This proposition is unreasonable since Luke is so very precise with language.[44] It is unrealistic to think a span of several years was narrow enough to warrant Luke's comment. If he could not be more precise than meaning a 10-year span, he would have said nothing on the matter.

Culturally, a man was only allowed to step into leadership at thirty years of age in first century Israel.[45] The fact Luke takes the trouble to point out Jesus was "about thirty" itself speaks to the importance of that age. Jesus Christ was called Rabbi, or teacher, from the beginning of His ministry. This title would generally not have been bestowed upon someone younger than thirty. If Christ were not at least within a few days or weeks of thirty years of age, and one was trying to support His right to teach and lead, the last thing to do would be to point out his age. Further, if he was even one day over thirty years of age, it would have added status in the eyes of the people and would have been much simpler to say He was "over thirty years of age" instead of "about thirty years of age."

If Christ was born in the fall or early winter of 5 B.C., as some have suggested, it is highly unlikely that meticulously accurate Luke would have regarded those several months younger than thirty as "about" thirty. If Jesus were born in late 5 B.C. and he began ministry as some suggest in spring of A.D. 27, Luke would have said he was **more** than thirty years of age! Clearly, Luke's description of "about thirty" at Passover, which is always in the spring, rules out a birth in any other season of the year.

Christ began His work of discipling 1 *Nisan*, April 8, A.D. 26, two weeks before Passover A.D. 26. This precise dating can be ascertained by using information in Scripture and counting backward from Christ's cleaning the Temple on 14 *Nisan*.

On 4 *Nisan* Christ turned the water into wine at the marriage in Cana. He then went down to Capernaum with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples and stayed there a few days (John 2:12). It was during His time with His mother that Jesus Christ turned 30 years of age on 7 *Nisan*. Just like in 5 B.C. when He was born, in A.D. 26 7 *Nisan* was also on April 13. Therefore, on that date Jesus became a full 30 years of age by both lunar and solar calendars.

Jesus honored appropriate traditions. Notice that although some who would become His disciples had begun to follow Jesus. However, His formal invitation to them to follow Him as students was not until after He was thirty years old and culturally allowed to lead. Again, when Mary asked Him to provide wine for the wedding, Jesus made the point, "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). Jesus apparently did not want to engage in public ministry until both the right age and the right moment conveyed the right message.

It seems Jesus wanted His first public act to be the cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem. This act carries

significant symbolism. Establishing a right relationship with God requires, as a first step, the willingness to have sins forgiven and purged from one's life as the body of a Christian is the "temple of the Holy Spirit." (I Corinthians 6:19). What Jesus did at the start to His public ministry represents perfectly what He does first in His followers' lives – cleanse them of sin.

The dates for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were 15-22 *Nisan* (April 19-26) in A. D. 26. Jesus' birthday being 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 B.C., means both his first disciples approaching him and His turning the water into wine were within two weeks of His thirtieth birthday, just as Luke says. As was his practice, Luke was being very precise with dating information.

Family Time for Christ's Birthday

Christ spent His birthday with His mother, brothers, and disciples in Capernaum just before going to Jerusalem for Passover A.D. 26 to start His public ministry. Christ's thirtieth birthday was spent showing love to His mother before His work called Him away. Yes, He was that thoughtful.

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"...being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli...the son of Abraham...the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the Son of Adam, the son of God." (Luke 3:23b-38)

Lessons From Luke's Genealogy of Jesus

Luke ends his discussions regarding the birth of Jesus Christ with His genealogy as it passed through His mother, Mary. This genealogy of Jesus puts His earthly life

in perspective. It places Him within the framework of the culture and history of His people. Understanding someone is easier when one knows their roots.

The genealogical record begins with Jesus as the "son" of Heli (Eli). Heli was Mary's father. Jewish genealogical records usually don't go back through the line of the mother as only the father's lineage mattered in Jewish law at that time.[46] This precept is probably why Mary is not listed between Jesus and Heli. Nevertheless, Luke was a historian. He obviously wanted to preserve the record of Christ's ancestry. And since he was attempting to reach a gentile audience, Jewish law was not more important than Christ's actual bloodline.

The simple fact Luke records the genealogy proves the importance of Mary's lineage. Scripture says Christ was a "high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:20). Yet just as Christ was in David's royal line legally by adoption through Joseph as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, Luke's Gospel shows Christ was a descendant of King David as well as priests through His mother, Mary.[47]

If anyone says the Bible does not value women or record important events involving them, they are either ignorant or dishonest. Luke's Gospel shows Mary's part in the miraculous birth, her humble and obedient character, as well as her prestigious heritage. For those who wish to consider them, Mary's lineage adds three other interesting pieces of information to ponder:

1) It proves Jesus' Jewish bloodline for future ages. Up until sometime in the first century A.D., Jewish custom and law regarded bloodline as passing through the father as during the Old Testament period.[48] However, during that century Jewish lineage became matrilineal. Even today it does not matter to the Jewish community if a person's father is 100 percent Jewish if their mother is not. If the mother is not Jewish, then neither is their child.[49]

   Again, having a Jewish mother may not have determined Jewishness in Israel at the time of Christ's birth, but it certainly does to the Jewish community today. Mary's genealogy shows to the modern Jew that Jesus Christ was a direct blood descendant of King David.

2) Luke's genealogical record extends beyond Abraham. It extends back to Adam and then to God. This record defends both the miraculous conception as well as defending the lineage that came through His mother. Both were ultimately from the creative act of God. Logically, if God can make a man out of dust, He can make one in a virgin's womb.

3) God is the Creator of all human life. God desired to be the Father of all mankind. Then, mankind rejected Him. Christ's work was to provide the possibility of restoration to all.

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Chapter 7 Summary

This chapter demonstrates that Luke 3 is very precise regarding when the ministry of John the Baptist began. Later in Luke 3, the Gospel writer reinforces his information declaring Christ was almost thirty years of age when He began His ministry. Knowing Christ began His ministry in the Passover season of A.D. 26 and that He turned thirty during that period supports the dating of His birth – 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 B.C.

Jesus was a Jew who honored Jewish tradition, waiting to begin public ministry until after He was 30 years of age. Luke's listing of Christ's lineage through Mary also defends His Jewishness to contemporary Jews, as well as containing powerful theological implications.

Section II

Christ's Birth Recorded in Matthew's Gospel

Jewish tradition and law mattered to Matthew and his primary audience, the Jews. It would seem God wanted him to defend Joseph and Mary's honor by documenting she became pregnant through a miracle. The Gospel of Matthew also presents the evidence proving Jesus Christ was a descendant of King David and a legal heir to David's throne through His adoption by Joseph. Matthew's Gospel starts with these important facts.

This section discusses the magi and the signs leading up to the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem. The wonder of the Star of Bethlehem, what it was and is and how it provides dating information, will be examined. A thought-provoking analysis will be done concerning the significance of the name Christ was to be given. Both the star and Jesus' name illuminate the beauty of God's plan unfolding in the birth of the King.

Matthew's Gospel also shares Herod the Great's villainy. It contains clues to the timing of Christ's birth and the events immediately following. It provides specific information restricting the date range of the family's flight to Egypt to a small window of time.

Why the Information in This Section Is Important

This section aids in understanding who Jesus Christ and His family were in their Jewish context. It also examines how Christ's name, not the word Jehovah, appeared in the Old Testament in very meaningful ways.

It will be shown how the Star of Bethlehem, and other signs leading up to its appearance, give historically verifiable points in time relevant to Christ's birth.

Chapter 8
Jewish Tradition and Law - a Chapter on Context (Matthew 1:1-25)

Jesus of Nazareth – Heir to the Throne

He Was Found Within the Womb – From JJM

The Actual Name Joseph Gave Christ

God's Name – Jesus – In the Old Testament

Mary Was Not Regarded as an Adulteress

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The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers... Jesse was the father of David the king... Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon… After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, and Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel… Matthan the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. (condensing of Matthew 1:1-17)

Jesus of Nazareth – Heir to the Throne

God has the power and right to fulfill His own promise that Jesus would "sit on the throne of His father David" any way He chooses. As Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "God's ways are always higher than ours." Sometimes God's works are established through unexpected means or come from unexpected sources. Therefore, Jesus' right to the throne needs to be evaluated from a variety of perspectives to better understand how God directed events.

One perspective is Mary's bloodline. Mary was a descendant of David as well as having "kinship with the Priesthood"[1]; however, maternal lineage did not count for the legal right to the throne, nor the priesthood. It was not even generally sufficient to inherit land as a member of a certain tribe or family within Israel.[2]

Yet Mary's bloodline does fulfill the word given to her by the angel. The angel did not necessarily say Jesus Christ would be a legal heir, nor the most direct heir, to the throne. The angel said Jesus would sit on the throne (rule) and He would be a descendant of David (Luke 1:32). God's fulfillment of these revelations was not dependent on human expectations or approval. God alone determined His Son, Messiah, would rule forever as a descendant of King David.

Another perspective was Joseph's bloodline. It is not evident who was in the primary position to be the heir to the throne, but Joseph was certainly a descendant of David. Yet men, like Solomon, became kings who were not the "primary" heir when they were enthroned. Since God chose the Messiah to come through Joseph's line, one might ask, "Did Joseph legally adopt Jesus?"

There is no recorded method of adoption among the Jews in the first century.[3] Contemporary Jewish thought would prohibit adoption of a son into the tribe of Judah, let alone the kingly line.[4] Yet historically, men were "adopted" to the place of a son who were not a man's blood descendant. Men of Judah occupied the throne by means of the Levirate Law of raising up a son for a deceased brother through his widow.[5] In essence, the son born to the heir's widow and his living brother was considered the child of the deceased brother who was in line for the throne, thus providing an heir in the dead man's line.

If there were a formal Jewish law whereby Joseph could have adopted Jesus, Joseph would not have done it. Joseph made every effort to keep Mary from questions of

immorality. By taking her into his bedchamber immediately, he protected her. He allowed the illusion to the community that Jesus Christ was his son. Those who knew of the angelic visits and of their messages to Elizabeth and Mary would know better, but most simply accepted that Joseph was Jesus' father.

Some say Joseph adopted Christ by giving Him His name. The concepts of authority and responsibility through naming is demonstrated by God's directing Adam to name the animals in the Garden of Eden.[6] Joseph was told by God's messenger to name Him Yeshua (Jesus). By naming the Child as Matthew 1:21 records, he was claiming temporal authority over and responsibility for Jesus to raise Him as his own.[7] Naming the Child was, at least, a symbol of adoption. Nevertheless, he did not name Him as a public declaration of adoption. Regardless, Joseph certainly functioned as His adoptive father.

Matthew's Gospel provides proof that within the Jewish culture and the Christian community, Joseph was regarded as Jesus' earthly father. The Gospel makes this case to its Jewish audience by including Joseph's genealogical record as that of Jesus Christ. No early Christian or Jewish scholar questioned the accuracy of Matthew's genealogy of Joseph.[8] Neither did Jews of the day question that Jesus was Joseph's son.

One might attempt to challenge Joseph as providing Christ's right to the throne based upon Scripture. Joseph's genealogy lists Jeconiah (Jechoniah) as one of his ancestors. Jeremiah 22:24 uses Jeconiah's shortened name form, Coniah, and contains a judgment upon this king that none of his descendants would ever sit upon the throne. Jeremiah 22:30 says Jeconiah would die childless. Yet despite God's judgment on Jeconiah, Scripture does include those who followed him in succession as his legal descendants through the Levirate law mentioned earlier.[9] Certainly, Matthew 1:11 lists him as a "father" of Joseph, but Luke 3:27 confirms Jeconiah/Coniah died childless,

and his legal son Shealtiel was actually the birth son of Neri. The line of descent to Joseph then continued through Shealtiel.

Since Maimonides' (1138-1204) work regarding Jewish law, most Jews have accepted that Messiah would not only be a descendant of King David, but also of his son Solomon, or perhaps through Solomon's seed but attributed to Nathan.[10] Both these positions are based upon conjecture. They presume since God established Solomon as king, the line of the Messiah must also go through him.

Rabbinical analysts have used I Chronicles 22:9-10, I Chronicles 28:5 (Solomon) and Isaiah 40:9 (Nathan) to suggest Messiah must descend through these men.[11] However, there is no such declaration made in Scripture. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that through an adoption by Joseph (Solomon) and through Mary's bloodline (Nathan), Christ descends through both of these lines of David.

Presuppositions are common. People often expect God to do things in a certain way, and not in His own unusual way. Could God not establish Jesus as heir to the throne of David in the manner of His choosing? If one is not already satisfied Christ was an heir to the throne through adoption to Joseph by Jewish custom, God provided another way to establish Jesus Christ as a legal heir to the throne.

The issue of who was a legal member of an Israelite household within Israel during the first century did not depend upon Jewish law. Although it was not the source of spiritual law, Rome was the source of civil and criminal law in Israel when Christ was born. Just as Christ's crucifixion was prophesied in the Old Testament, but accomplished through Roman law, so too, Jesus was legally the son of Joseph through Roman law. He became a member of Joseph's household and a legal descendant of

Joseph by Roman law when He was listed as a son of Joseph during the next Roman census after His birth. There is proof this registration occurred. It is a breathtaking corroboration of Scripture in correspondence to the emperor dated to the second century. The pertinent part of this letter and an evaluation of its meaning are provided in the appendix, "**Censuses and Oaths**."

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He Was Found Within the Womb

*And the beginning of Jesus Christ was thus – before they had come together, although Mary, His mother, was engaged to Joseph – **He was found** within the womb, existing from out of the Holy Spirit.*

And Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to expose her, decided to dismiss her from their marriage contract privately. (Matthew 1:18-19 from *Journey of Jesus the Messiah, JJM*)

The translation of these verses as appearing in *JJM* is presented here for the reader's convenience. These verses, explanations of them, along with footnotes from *JJM* have already been included within this text in chapter two.

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"And while he was thinking about these things, behold an angel appeared to him through a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to yourself as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from out of the Holy Spirit. And she shall give birth to a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21 *JJM*)

The Actual Name Joseph Gave Christ

The English translations of Matthew 1:21 record that Joseph was to name the Child "Jesus." The earliest copies of Matthew still in existence are in Greek, reflecting the name as word *Iēsŏus* (SGW #2424). Yet Matthew was written in Hebrew.[12] Strong's notes *Iēsŏus* is a translation of the Hebrew name: *Yᵉhôwshûwa'* / *Jehoshua* or *Yᵉhôwshû'a* / *Joshua* (SHW #3091), which are alternate forms of the name *Yêshûwa'* / *Jeshua* (SHW #3442 or #3443). This Hebrew name/word means: "The Lord saves," "The Lord our Salvation," or "He will save." This meaning is why it makes sense the angel said to Joseph, "for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

The angel did not tell Mary He would be named "Jesus," the English word/name, as English did not yet exist. Nor did the angel say "*Iēsŏus*" the Greek word/name was to be His name. Mary may have understood Greek, but it certainly was not her native tongue. The angel spoke to Mary in either Aramaic or Hebrew (Luke 1:31). She was told her son, the Messiah, would be given the Hebrew name: *Yehoshua (or Yoshua or Yeshua).*[13]

Joseph did not hear or speak English or Greek in his dream. It would have been his native language either Hebrew or Aramaic. Thus, the name he was instructed to give Christ was *Yehoshua (or Yoshua or Yeshua).* If there is concern whether the everyday language of Mary and Joseph was Hebrew or Aramaic, it does not affect the issue. The forms of the name of Christ were identical between both these languages.[14]

To be clear, "Jesus" is an English derivative of the ancient Greek form of the Hebrew or Aramaic name Messiah was given. However, since He was named *Yehoshua (or Yoshua or Yeshua),* Joshua is a better English name for Him since it is the actual translation of the Hebrew name into English.

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God's Name – Jesus – In the Old Testament

Jesus' birth did not represent His beginning. Scripture teaches, Christ existed from before time and creation with the Father and the Holy Spirit as part of the Triune God. Thus, it is a reasonable question to ask if His name appears in the Old Testament signifying Him personally or as a representation of His ministry.

The answer is yes! Christ's name appeared in the Old Testament in three Hebrew forms, the long form *Yehoshua/Jehoshua*, as well as the two shortened forms *Yoshua/Joshua* and *Yeshua/Jeshua*. Examining all three Old Testament forms of His name and their uses aids in understanding its meaning to the Jews of first-century Israel, and what it means for people today. God communicated so much when He instructed that Christ's name was to be *Yeshua*.

Before examining the topic of the name(s) for *Yeshua/ Jeshua* in the Old Testament further, a brief explanation is in order to understand why a "Y" is also listed for the names along with the "J" form. The Old Testament was mostly written in Hebrew. Hebrew does not have corresponding letters for some of the letters of the English alphabet. There is no "J" in Hebrew. The letter in the Hebrew language that is translated as a "J" is a *Yod*, which looks somewhat like an apostrophe and is better translated as "Y" since it produces the sound of "Y" as in the word "yes."

It is common for Spanish speakers in some nations such as Argentina to produce what sounds like "Jess" when communicating in the English language and trying to say the word "Yes." In the same manner, the Hebrew *Yod* may sound like a "Y" or a "J" depending upon the phonetic patterns of the language a speaker uses.

English translations of the Bible that list the names with a "J" instead of a "Y" are attempting to be faithful to the sounds English speakers are accustomed to rather than the "Y" sound of the Hebrew tongue. Those who note details will also recognize that some English translations have used *Jeshua*/*Yeshua* and *Joshua*/*Yoshua* as well as *Yehoshua*/*Jehoshua* interchangeably with each other. This fact is apparent by comparing a few translations. This text uses names with both "J" and "Y" spelling in an attempt to match common usage. Nevertheless, the letters and sounds are interchangeable based upon local phonetics. When the text below quotes scholars, the spelling included in their texts is reflected.

Hoshea was the birth name of *Joshua*, the son of Nun, the personal aide and successor of Moses. *Hoshea* means "deliverer" or "salvation."[15] One may recognize the similarity between *Hoshea* and *Hosanna*, which the crowd cried out to Jesus Christ on His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. *Hosanna* means "save us" or "save us we pray." Numbers 13:16 records Moses changing *Hoshea's* name to *Jehoshua* (SHW #3091), meaning "The Lord (our) Salvation."

Nevertheless, the word some translate as "the Lord" and others translate as "Jehovah" at the beginning of his name *Jehoshua* is neither. It is actually a reflection of the unpronounceable word for God that was used throughout the Old Testament since God Himself did not give His name. He refused even Moses' request to know His name. The word mistranslated as Jehovah was the Tetragrammaton, reflected in English as the letters YHWH.

The Tetragrammaton has no vowels and could not be spoken, as vowels are what produce the sound which when combined with consonants produces spoken language. In the oriental culture of the Old and New Testament period, to know someone's name and to use it was to be either their equal or superior. No Jew fathomed

the heresy of implying he thought he was God's equal or superior.

One might ask, "From where then does the name 'Jehovah' originate?" Here is a quote of Sir Godfry Driver from his work, *Introduction to the Old Testament of the New English Bible*:

> The early translators generally substituted 'Lord'; for [YHWH]...The Reformers preferred Jehovah, which first appeared as Iehouah in 1530 AD in Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch (Exodus 6:3), from which it passed into other Protestant Bibles.[16]

Those claiming God's name is "Jehovah" may be reflecting belief in the one true God who created all things along with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, yet that word was not used to represent God until a millennium and a half after Christ walked on Earth.

"Humble Yourself in the Sight of the Lord"

There are those who reject Jesus Christ as God while arrogantly claiming to know and use God's name. Yet God refused Moses when he asked God for His name. In both Old and New Testaments, the only name God provides is His Son's. Claiming to know and have the right to use the name of God would likely have gotten one stoned in Biblical times. The rejection of Christ as Savior and Lord will result in much worse on Judgment Day.

As mentioned earlier, the long form of the name for the son of Nun, Moses' servant, *Yehoshua* has two shortened forms that are used in the Old Testament. The one form is *Yeshua*/*Jeshua*. This shortened form was the name of the high priest, who was the son of *Jozadak* listed in Ezra 2:2; 3:2; 5:2 as a partner of Governor Zerubbabel. It is also the

name of a line, or house, of priests (Ezra 2:36). Whereas Ezra uses the form of the name *Yeshua/Jeshua,* this same man is referenced in Zechariah 3 and in Haggai 1:1 with the alternate spelling *Yehoshua/Jehoshua* or *Yoshua/Joshua*. Zechariah and Haggai also spell *Yoshua/Joshua's* father's name in its longer form: *Jehozadak*. *Yeshua/Jeshua* is the same man with the same father.

In the book of Zechariah, this man *Yoshua/Joshua* receives two powerful and prophetic messages from God. Theologian Marvin R. Vincent notes that in Zechariah 3:1-10 *Yeshua/Jeshua* prophetically foreshadows Jesus Christ. In the vision, *Yeshua/Jeshua*, as the representative of the people, was clothed in filthy garments symbolizing their sins. Yet the Lord defeats and rebukes Satan thus redeeming and restoring his people.[17] Vincent says, "we have a type of our 'Great High Priest,' touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all points tempted and tried like as we are."[18]

This same man is again referenced in Zechariah 6:11-13 as a symbol of the future *Yeshua* the Savior:

> And take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Then say to him, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."

This prophetic message presents Jesus Christ as the "Branch" – a play on the name Nazareth as mentioned earlier. It says in the NASB that He will "build" the temple. The Hebrew word used in this Old Testament verse is "banah" (SHW #1129). This word can be translated as

several words; among them, “rebuild.” Translating the word as “rebuild,” one sees the Branch (Christ) rebuilding a temple. He makes this claim to the religious leaders in John 2:19 when He says that if they tear down “this Temple,” meaning His body, in three days He will “egeiró” meaning raise it up (SGW #1453). It is not a stretch to suggest rebuilding a destroyed building is a perfect metaphor for raising a dead body.

In addition, Zechariah 6:11-13 prophetically predicted Christ’s ministry is that of a High Priest who sits on the throne as King. All these statements were made symbolically over a man named Joshua; Jesus Christ’s actual name as reflected in the Old Testament. This prophecy points to Christ.

Nehemiah 8:17 demonstrates the interchangeability of the three forms of the name. Its form in this verse is *Yeshua*/*Jeshua*, yet most translations treat it as *Yoshua*/*Joshua* since it is a direct reference back to the son of Nun, Moses’ servant who became his successor. It is important to note, just as the use of the name for a high priest is a reference to some of Christ’s roles, the use of the name for the son of Nun points toward Christ as victorious warrior. In his word study, Vincent notes the son of Nun is also a type of Christ since in Revelation 19:11-16 Jesus will return for his people as a military commander and deliverer.[19]

The English name, or for that matter the Greek name for Christ, most certainly did not appear in the Old Testament. However, according with God’s plan and by His will, the Hebrew/Aramaic form of the name for Christ most certainly did appear numerous times in the Old Testament foreshadowing Christ and His ministry.

Arthur E. Glass wrote a piece entitled “Yeshua in the Tanakh” (The Name of Jesus in the Old Testament). In it he cites several verses from the Old Testament that he states use the name of the Lord. One such passage is

Psalm 91:14-16. Here is both his translation of those verses and their fulfillment in Revelation 22:3-4:

> Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high (raise him above circumstances), because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life (eternal life) will I satisfy him, and show him my [YESHUA (Jesus)] salvation of course. That promise is realized in Revelation 22:3-4: And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see HIS face.[20]

Glass quotes prophetic verse Isaiah 62:11 as follows:

> "Behold, Jehovah has proclaimed unto the end of the world. Say ye to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold thy YESHUA [Jesus] cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.'"

In this verse, *Yeshua* (Salvation) is a person not a thing! He moves (comes). He gives things (reward). He does things (work). It could not be more clear!

Arthur Glass also uses these precious verses to tie the name of Christ in the New Testament to the fulfillment of God's promises found in the Old Testament. Here is Glass' quote of Luke 2:29-32 from the NASB:

> *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation [YESHUA (Jesus)], Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A Light of Revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.* (Luke 2:29-32)

Salvation was not just His work; it was His name and that name for God did appear in the Old Testament.

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Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah 7:14]*: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."*

And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1:22-25) (underlining added)

Mary Was Not Regarded as an Adulteress

It has long been preached that Joseph and Mary were not provided with a room in Bethlehem because they were outcasts due to her early pregnancy. This assumption is fallacious as there is no evidence they were believed to be immoral. If the citizens of Nazareth had known Mary was pregnant and believed Joseph was not the father, he might not have had the choice or the opportunity to "put her away in secret." She might have been the victim of a public execution. By taking Mary into his bed chamber as his bride after a legal engagement, they would have been regarded as legally married. The fact the couple did not have a customary marriage festival might have generated some gossip. However, there was no justification for public scorn or punishment since they were not breaking the Law of Moses.

Engagement was a contract with a purchase price giving the husband the right to claim his bride at any point after the contract was ratified by her "taking the cup" the groom

offered. To get out of the marriage after engagement would require the same bill of divorce as it would after the marriage ceremony or many years of marriage.[21] After the engagement, a man was required by custom to get his father's permission to collect his betrothed and consummate the marriage. This permission was given after his father was satisfied the couple's new residence was adequately prepared. With his father's permission, or without it if he had passed away, Joseph had the right to take his wife-to-be at any point after engagement.

Mary and Joseph had been betrothed when he paid the purchase price for his bride. Therefore, when an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary as his wife, Joseph had the legal right to do so. He immediately got up and obeyed.

Scripture makes it clear Joseph did not have sexual intercourse with Mary until after the birth of Christ. However, taking Mary immediately, presumably while it was still dark, was intentional. His immediate obedience to God's instruction provided Mary protection from the accusation she was immoral. The couple was neither considered unrighteous in Nazareth, nor denied a guest quarter in Bethlehem because they were outcasts. Although 200 years later the Talmud implies otherwise,[22] there is no indication that during Mary's lifetime anyone in Israel asserted Jesus Christ was an illegitimate child. Quite the contrary, John 6:42 records the people said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

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Chapter 8 Summary

Failing to consider Jesus Christ in the context of who He was within His culture allows for misunderstanding of important parts of what Scripture says about Him. He was adopted by Joseph directly into the Davidic line to the throne of Israel. His Name appears in the Old Testament and does so in ways that prophetically describe His ministry. He is shown as the high priest who redeems by taking away guilt and sin in Zechariah 3:1-10. Zechariah 6:11-13 declares that the "Branch," Jesus, will rebuild the Temple. This statement is a metaphor for Christ's Resurrection of the Temple that was His body. He will rule as King while also being High Priest. Revelation 19:11-16 displays Christ triumphant in His future role as *Yeshua* the victorious warrior.

Understanding the engagement/marriage contract, and that Joseph took Mary immediately after the angel spoke to him, reveals God protecting Mary from the accusation of immorality. Jews of the day regarded Joseph as Jesus' father. Further, God used Roman law to document Jesus' being in the Davidic line through His name being listed on a census role as part of Joseph's household. God is not limited to the means people are comfortable with or expect. He can use even the efforts of the ungodly to achieve His purposes.

Chapter 9
The Magi and the Appearance of the Star
(Matthew 2:1-6)

When the Magi Visited Herod the Great

The Magi and Their Trips

The Visibility of Star of Bethlehem

The Meaning of the Surprise Seen "In the East"

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Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king [Herod the Great]*, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem saying, where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east… .* (Matthew 2:1-2a)

When the Magi Visited Herod the Great

The verses above attest that Herod the Great was still alive when Jesus Christ was born. He was also in Jerusalem when the magi arrived looking for Jesus. Herod died on 7 *Kislev*, November 26, 4 B.C. While this date for the death of Herod the Great is not widely supported, it is not new, and the evidence clearly points to it. To evaluate this conclusion, consider the evidence presented in the appendix of this book entitled, "**Herod the Great's Years of Reign and Date of Death**."

Herod the Great's illnesses, medical treatments, and his death on November 26, 4 B.C. mean the magi could not have arrived after late summer of that year. It will be shown that the magi's visit can actually be attributed to a narrow date range close to Christ's birth and much earlier than late summer 4 B.C.

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The Magi and Their Trips

The magi were a part of the people group then known as the Medes. This group dwelt within a very large area spanning at least from Northern Babylon to Persia. The suggestion the magi were Medes is reasonable. Chuck Missler, founder of Koinonia House ministry, states it well: "The magi were a hereditary priesthood of the Medes credited with profound and extraordinary religious knowledge…some of them…were appointed by Darius the Great over the state religion of Persia."[1] In the time of Christ, they were still recognized as religious leaders. Today, the descendants of Median blood can be found among the people group known as the Kurds as well as groups of people living in Armenia and Iran.[2]

It is also suggested the clan of magi who came to see Jesus Christ could have proceeded from the area that is now Saudi Arabia.[3] Some have argued the magi in question could have come from as close as Yemen.[4] Author David Hughes suggests the magi could have traveled from as many as eight different areas, but he believes ancient Persia is the most logical choice.[5] Early Church father Justin Martyr wrote that the magi came from "Arabia." If his report is correct, it would still leave several of Hughes' options still viable.[6]

Although it may not be conclusive from where the magi came, they did travel in a western direction to arrive in Israel. It is also almost certain their trip involved a great distance and a significant number of people. In order for a large group of people and animals to survive, it is highly unlikely the caravan progressed straight across the desert. Rather, it must have taken the watered route known as the "fertile crescent." T. E. Lawrence recorded in his book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, that a fully loaded camel can comfortably travel 50 miles a day.[7] A journey from

Babylon to Jerusalem via the fertile crescent is a trip of 900 miles. A trip from what is now Tehran, Iran, another area where numerous magi resided, would have been twice that distance. Travel from present day Saudi Arabia or Yemen could have been more than 2,500 miles by the same route. Perhaps from those areas, the magi could have taken a more direct path. The shortest of these trips, including packing and stops for resupplying, would have taken close to a month. The longest of these trips would have taken two months.[8]

Despite all the investigation and speculation concerning where the magi were traveling from and their travel time before arriving in Jerusalem, it really does not have a bearing on the question of the specific date of Christ's birth. The timing of their trip to Jerusalem does not date Christ's birth because Scripture does not say the star appeared the night of Christ's birth. Scripture only says it was a sign of His birth. The star could have appeared before, during, or after His birth, it does not change the truth of its meaning.

However, their trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem is another matter. The timing and Biblical description provides some very precise and wonderful information crucial to the dating of Christ's birth. This short trip is very important to this study and will be considered later.

In addition to the magi's short trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the magi's knowledge of astronomy matters to this study. The knowledge of the magi, as recorded in Scripture, has significant bearing both on the understanding of what the Star of Bethlehem was and the timing of a major event after Christ's birth - the slaughter of the baby boys around Bethlehem.

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The Visibility of Star of Bethlehem

Scripture says several very specific things about the star, but there are a few curious things it does not say. It does not record whether the Star of Bethlehem was visible in the Judean sky when the shepherds were visited by the angels. Neither does the Bible say it was a feature dominating the night sky on the night of Christ's birth. Yet Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote very early in the second century that the star did dominate the sky for a time.[9] His record supports researcher Carolyn M. Beehler's belief the Star of Bethlehem was a supernova. Some of Beehler's discoveries will be presented later in this volume.

Regardless of how bright the Star of Bethlehem may have been, it was the angels, who appeared briefly to the shepherds, who dominated the sky above a particular hillside on the night of Christ's birth. Some writers have confused the two and suggested the phrase, "the glory of the Lord shone around them," could have been the light seen by the magi in the east.[10] This theory is unsupportable Biblically and absurd when evaluated through science or common sense.

Just because the record makes no mention of the shepherds seeing or recognizing the star does not mean the object the magi viewed as a sign of the birth of the King was invisible to those in Israel. The star would have been visible at some point to inhabitants of much of the Earth, and certainly within Israel.

One needs to be a disciplined observer to see changes in the heavens. A person also needs to be educated to know what they are looking at in the night sky. Knowledge and discipline at this level are rare even today when instruments make it easy. Such knowledge and discipline were rare and much more difficult when only the eyeball and simple tools were available for observation. Further, knowledge of what things could represent, as they relate to ancient prophecy, is yet another area of expertise.

It is entirely possible learned people in Israel saw the star and understood the possibilities but kept their mouths shut. Remember, Herod the Great was ruler at the time in Israel. He would have executed anyone who would have made even the slightest comment about a sign in the heavens announcing the birth of a new king. This tyrant ordered the butchering of as many as 20 innocent children to eliminate his perceived threat to his throne.[11] He also killed his own children in paranoia to protect his reign. Certainly, if a local astronomer was foolish enough to open his mouth and say a new king was born, and Herod heard the report, he would have been silenced – permanently!

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The Meaning of the Surprise Seen "In the East"

"In the east" could have been a reference to where the magi were when they saw the star, a land those in Israel would have regarded as being "the East." This phrase would also be a normal part of a conversation with a man as one stands next to him in Jerusalem, which was west of the place where the star was first seen. These two possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

A third possible understanding would be the alternative translation of the Greek word that could have been rendered in English, "at its rising" instead of "in the east." The phrase, "at its rising," could be understood to mean the star was visible in the morning sky before dawn. According to Hughes:

> The Greek verb used is *phainesthai* (to appear) used here applies to the heliacal rising of the star that the Magi had seen...The heliacal rising is the earliest visible rising of a star at daybreak. For any star or planet...this only occurs once a year...The heliacal rising, in the popular

> astrology of the day, was thought to coincide with the birth date of a person. Herod's question to the Magi was equivalent to his asking, "When was the king born?"[12]

Hughes goes on to speculate this statement was in answer to Herod's question as to when the object appeared. Herod wanted to make sure he killed this new king.[13] The issues of timing and location of the birth were paramount in Herod the Great's mind. He is quoted as asking both questions in Matthew's Gospel.

Herod did not use a helical rising as the determining date for the slaughter of the little boys. He did not use the Star of Bethlehem itself as the sign to determine from what date of birth to kill them. The age range Herod used points toward an earlier heavenly sign. Herod's slaughter of infants will be examined more fully later.

While appreciating Hughes' analysis of the term "at its rising," this translation option cannot be applied to the Bethlehem Star, as it was not a regularly appearing occurrence. The appearance of the Star of Bethlehem was a surprise which prompted the magi's actions. The magi had charts and knowledge of the planetary movements and the stars. If their trip was the result of either a conjunction of planets or the movement of a star, then they would have known about it long beforehand.[14] If such an event was an indication to them a king (the King) was soon to be born in Israel and they wanted to worship Him, they would already have been in Israel. Why wait to move until after the event if that event could have been predicted in advance?

Astronomers would certainly have anticipated the helical rising of a known heavenly body. It would not have been cause for a long, expensive, dangerous, and sudden trip. Although other signs could have pointed to something special happening, it was the star's unexpected appearance that resulted in their trip to Israel.[15] As

Matthew 2:2 says, it was because they saw the star “in the east” that they journeyed west to worship the king.

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Chapter 9 Summary

Herod was alive to see the magi when they arrived in Jerusalem looking for information. He died over a year later. The magi actually made two trips to find the Christ, one from the East to Jerusalem to get directions to where the New King could be found, and a second trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The Star of Bethlehem was visible for many days over much of the Earth, including Israel.

The magi first saw the star when they were in the East and then they traveled in a westward direction to Jerusalem. The star was a surprise to the magi who knew every normal celestial object and their courses through the sky.

Chapter 10
The Heavenly Sign(s)

What the Star Was Not

What Has Been Suggested to Be the Star of Bethlehem

A New Possibility

The Sign of His Return

The Reasons the Magi Concluded the Star Was a Sign a New King Was Born in Israel

The Beginning of the Signs Pointing to Christ's Birth

Duration and Continuity of the Star's Visibility

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What the Star Was Not

Perhaps the best way to identify the Star of Bethlehem is through a process of elimination. Two objects suggested as being the Star of Bethlehem over the years were not a single object, but rather two groups of objects. The first group of objects is two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, which came into close conjunction three times in 7 B.C: May, October, and December.[1] Greater description will not be provided here because, although they played an important role in preparing the magi for God's announcement through the star, these conjunctions were not the star.

A second group of objects proposed for the Star of Bethlehem was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn along with Mars in February 6 B.C.[2] Again, this three-planet conjunction was part of God's plan to draw the attention of the magi to the approaching birth of a King in Israel. They were not the star.

The Star of Bethlehem could not have been either the conjunction of planets that appeared three times in 7 B.C., or the conjunction that appeared in 6 B.C. Matthew 2:2 says the magi, who were astronomers, referred to it as a "star." As stated earlier, these men knew the planets and the course of their movements in the night sky. Conjunctions of planets can be uncommon or even rare. Yet if it was some conjunction of planets that triggered their trip to Israel, they would have said they saw His **sign** in the sky. Rather, they said a **star** motivated them to make their trip (Matthew 2:2). It could not have been a planet or some conjunction of planets.

The Star of Bethlehem could not have been a meteor. Again, the magi knew the characteristics of a meteor. Yes, a meteor moves across the sky matching what is inferred when reading in Scripture that a star guided them. Yet a meteor is quite temporary and therefore could not have guided the magi even on their final leg to Bethlehem. A meteor was also not so unusual as to indicate something as great as the change of an epoch or the birth of a king. Larger objects such as comets were recognized by the ancients as marking a major event, but not meteors.[3]

Some have suggested the Star of Bethlehem was simply a supernatural occurrence. However, such a guess is not necessary, as what is described in Scripture could have been a naturally occurring event.

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What Has Been Suggested to Be the Star of Bethlehem

The following three logical things have been suggested as being The Star of Bethlehem: a comet, a nova, or a normally formed supernova. All three would match the Scriptural description. However, in their common forms, none of the three satisfy all the historical evidence.

A Comet

A comet is an interesting candidate to be the Star of Bethlehem. It is bright and moves across the sky. In addition, the rotation of the Earth adds to the appearance of a comet's movement. It can stay in the sky for a period of many days. Therefore, depending upon its length of visibility, the magi could have completed a very long journey before it disappeared. A comet is likely to return, so it can be expected to reappear in the future unless some catastrophe alters its flight. Many have considered this fact as an implication, based upon Matthew 24:30 that the Star of Bethlehem will reappear as Christ's sign in the sky when He returns.

All the characteristics of a comet match what Scripture and the magi described, but a comet is not a star…or is it? The answer to this question depends upon perspective. Today, a comet is not called a star, but the Gospel of Matthew was written in the first century. During that period, a comet was considered a specific type of star, not just in a small region, but throughout the entire orient. The Chinese even made distinctions between comets with tails and those without tails. They called a tailed comet a sui-hsing, which means "broom star." The broom refers to the tail of the comet.[4] Oriental records document that their astronomers identified an object they called a broom star that has since been recognized by scholars as the Star of Bethlehem.

Matthew 2:9 says the star "went on before them" and "stood over." The phrase "stood over" or the similar phrase "hung over," are "uniquely applied in ancient literature to describe a comet."[5] Even though current definitions would not say a comet was a "star," during the first century, it was. It was not an error for the magi, or Matthew, to use the term "star" to describe the object if it was a comet. The word "star" has simply become more narrowly and precisely defined.

Chinese records indicate a sui-hsing (broom star) appeared in March/April 5 B.C. Many have said the object the Chinese documented was a comet with a tail.[6] The following scholars pin down the dates the object became visible with slight variations. They are as follows: March 9 - April 6 (Mark Kidger); March 10 - April 5 (David Hughes); March 10 - April 7 (David Clark and Richard Stephenson).[7]

Korean astronomers recorded what most believe was the same object in the same part of the sky during the same month. However, their records indicate it appeared on March 31, 4 B.C. Whereas this serves as corroborative evidence of the existence of the star itself, the Korean dating is suspect as the record was most likely damaged or miscopied as the date it says the star appeared was a nonexistent date – as if one had written, "February 32nd."[8] Most astronomers and scholars regard the Chinese and the Korean records as documentation of the same object.

It has been suggested this object was the Star of Bethlehem. Yet there is a problem. The Chinese and Koreans both described the object as being in the same area of the sky. No scholarship asserts the Korean record documents that the object moved. The Chinese record seems to "imply that the object was stationary"[9]. A comet would not have stayed in one spot in relation to the other objects of the night sky. It would have moved across the sky, not just as Earth rotated, but in relation to other celestial objects. The object the Chinese and Koreans recorded will receive further attention shortly, nevertheless, it was not a comet.

The Chinese and Korean records mention other comets in 5 and 4 B.C. These, however, can be ruled out as the Star of Bethlehem because their appearances were very brief.[10]

A Nova

Some have conjectured the Star of Bethlehem was a nova.[11] A nova would have been a suddenly appearing object. It can be very bright. It would have been regarded as a star by the magi. It would have been understood to potentially carry important meaning. A nova often is visible for a period of months. A nova would have stayed in the same point in the night sky in relation to other objects. It would have moved, as the entire night sky does, from the east to the west as each night progressed and would have appeared a little earlier in the evening each night.

A nova is a spontaneous and temporary increase in the energy output of a star. The star grows brighter for a time, then it diminishes back to a new normal level of radiance. It explosively ejects matter, but it does not destroy itself. The host star continues to exist and may cycle back and nova again.[12]

A Supernova

A supernova has all the characteristics of a nova except a supernova is a bigger explosion of a star that changes the star's form as it expels a greater portion of its mass. That star will never nova or supernova again.[13] It becomes either a dwarf star, which produces little light, or a densely packed neutron star, which does not radiate light uniformly around its surface.

A supernova is an intriguing option for the Star of Bethlehem. If the star was a supernova, then it produced a neutron star. A neutron star radiates high energy particles and electromagnetic radiation from its magnetic poles. It can be observed as a pulsar when those magnetic poles point at Earth in its rotation. A pulsar would allow one to identify the location of a previous star that likely had undergone a supernova. There is such a pulsar that

could be the residue of the Star of Bethlehem. This pulsar is still visible.

Honor is due the astronomers who were perhaps the first to suggest this specific pulsar could have been the Star of Bethlehem. During the 1960s and 1970s, Russian astronomer B. V. Kukarin of Moscow's Sternberg Institute led a team that studied and recorded variable stars. This study included the examination of ancient Chinese and Korean records. So, what does an astronomer do who thinks he has solved the riddle of the identity of the Star of Bethlehem? One would no doubt want to share the news and get the credit. Yet he was in a bind since he was serving in a communist country whose leadership would be more than displeased with national research supporting the accuracy of the Bible, which to them was a subversive book.

It seems Kukarin cleverly announced his team's discovery of the Star of Bethlehem (although he accepted the Korean dating of 4 B.C.). In his documents he notes a Korean po-shing, or tailed comet, was visible over Palestine.[14] Did they really need to say, "over Palestine?" It was, of course, visible over Israel as its latitude is close to that of China and Korea! The object was visible to much of the world. Why note that a Chinese/Korean discovery was visible in Palestine? The only reason that makes sense is that he wanted to make his discovery and the object known to colleagues, who would have understood the inference, so the discovery could be recognized and shared.

A researcher from the recent past, Carolyn Beehler, strongly supports the determination that the Star of Bethlehem was a supernova. She deciphered that an ancient painting had a message encoded within it identifying the location of the Star of Bethlehem. The painting containing the star chart is on the ceiling of the Priscilla Catacomb.[15] In addition, she suggested astronomer Joseph H. Taylor identified coordinates of a

pulsar matching the location identified in the painting of the Star of Bethlehem.[16]

The pulsar Taylor found is within the area of the sky both the Chinese and the Koreans identified. The "broom star" the Chinese identified was located by them in the Ch'ien-niu Chinese constellation that includes Alpha and Beta Capricorni, stars of the Capricornus constellation. The "bushy star" the Koreans identified was located by them in the Ho-Ku Chinese constellation. This Chinese constellation includes the star Altair and other stars to the south of the Aquila constellation.[17]

The Ch'ien-niu and Ho-Ku are adjacent Chinese constellations. The star Altair is a few degrees from Alpha and Beta Capricornii. Therefore, the Chinese and the Koreans identified the same region of the sky as Taylor and Beehler did for the object Beehler (and apparently Kukarin) believed was the Star of Bethlehem.

Beehler's discovery should be celebrated! Yet before examining her work, consideration will be given to the following addition to the discussion by Ronald David Glassman, contributing author to this work (and the brother of this author).

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A New Possibility

As David Glassman examined the material gathered for this book pertaining to this subject, he posited an interesting theory. He suggested the Star of Bethlehem was an "asymmetric supernova." Supernovas explode in all directions but may explode asymmetrically so that there is a greater mass ejection in one direction. An asymmetrical supernova with a greater plasma ejection in one direction could look similar to a comet with a tail. An asymmetrical supernova could also produce a pulsar.

Therefore, if the supernova is asymmetrical and the asymmetric ejection is not near a magnetic pole and the star becomes a pulsar, two things would be noticeable on Earth: a "tail" making it appear to be a "broom star" for a period of months and the pulsating radiation would be detectable for many years to follow. Scientists have calculated the typical lifetime of a pulsar as 10 million years.

A supernova, including an asymmetrical one, would also match the following criteria of the Star of Bethlehem. It would match Ignatius' description of a star illuminating the sky - a supernova can sometimes be so bright as to be seen by the naked eye even in the daytime. It would have appeared suddenly and been visible for several months. It remains at the same point in the night sky in relation to other objects as the Chinese described the object they saw in 5 B.C., which does not conflict with Scripture when understood correctly.

This variable star – the pulsar identified by Kukarin – was almost certainly the same one Beehler discovered in the ancient painting and that appeared shortly before the birth of Jesus Christ. In addition to the timing of the sighting of the object recorded by the Chinese in 5 B.C. fitting the date of Christ's birth, the length of its stay also matches perfectly. The object was visible for a period of at least 70 days and may have been visible several days more.[18] Evidence clearly points to this object being the Star of Bethlehem.

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The Sign of His Return

As mentioned, Matthew 24:30 says regarding the return of Christ:

> And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

Matthew 24:30 does not rule out the possibility of the "sign" being a reappearance of the "Star of Bethlehem" or any other star. Yet Jesus did not say the "sign" was a star. If it were a star, it would seem He would have provided that detail. Nor does Scripture say the sign in the sky of His return would be the same type of object recognized in the first century as a star, or that the sign appears at the same position in the sky.

This author believes the "sign" of Jesus' return is a meteor which matches the description of a *rhomphaia*, the weapon which Scripture says will proceed from Christ's mouth. For further study of the analysis of this object one may wish to read, *The Return of Jesus the Messiah*, written by this author, available at Gethsemanebooks.store.

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The Reasons the Magi Concluded the Star Was a Sign a New King Was Born in Israel

There are two ways to examine this question. First, it should be considered from an astrological perspective. The conjunction of planets near the time of Christ's birth mentioned earlier, in and of themselves, were not enough to send the magi on their way. However, it is highly likely that the conjunctions set the stage for the magi to interpret the meaning of the Star of Bethlehem. The 7 B.C. conjunctions of the same two planets, which occurred in May, October, and December within Pisces, would have suggested to ancient astrologers "that a Messiah-King will be born in Israel."[19] Pisces was the constellation the ancients associated with the Jews.[20] The next conjunction

in 6 B.C., which was also in Pisces, has been traditionally regarded as a sign of the birth of Christ.[21]

In effect, these conjunctions prepared the magi to understand the significance of the star. As Sir Colin Humphreys says, "To the magi the repeated occurrence of the 'perfect' number three may also have been significant: a triple conjunction, then three planets massing and finally a third astronomical sign."[22] The third sign Humphreys cites was actually a combination of signs, also occurring in Pisces. Astronomer Mark Kidger describes the same event noting:

> On the evening of February 20, 5 B.C. the two-day old Moon would have passed very close to Jupiter in the sky. The magi would have seen the spectacular pairing of Jupiter and the Moon slightly to the east of yet another pairing, of Mars and Saturn. This configuration, in particular, would have intrigued them... The magi knew that something was going to happen in Judea.[23]

Thus, a spectacular surprise object appearing shortly after the conjunctions was the cause of the journey to Israel.

The second type of indicator prompting the magi to believe a star was "His" star was prophecy and oral tradition. Numbers 24:17 contains a prophecy made by Balaam. It says: "a star will come forth from Jacob, And [sic] a scepter shall rise from Israel." Notice this prophecy treats "a star" and "a king" as interchangeable. Therefore, this prophecy could be interpreted to mean a star was a sign for the new King. Balaam was from a land east of Israel. His prophecy could have been remembered among astronomers in Babylon, Persia, or beyond.

The ancient Persian prophet, Zoroaster, who lived at least several hundred years before Christ, is another religious leader from the East who could have pointed to Jesus'

birth. Zoroaster was the founder of a sect of magi. Some have suggested he may have been of Jewish heritage, or at least familiar with the Old Testament prophecy from Numbers 24:17. Zoroaster told his followers when the Messiah was born, a star would appear and shine in the day. He further ordered them to go where the star directed and offer gifts and worship the Messiah. Numerous others prophesied similarly about a star accompanying the birth of a king or messiah for Israel.[24]

If the magi were not influenced by ancient prophecy, specifically Old Testament prophecy, then their actions were certainly an amazing coincidence. Isaiah 60:6 says,

> A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord.

The magi, by chance, intent, or providence, fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah and Zoroaster.

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The Beginning of the Signs Pointing to Christ's Birth

While Scripture does not say the Star of Bethlehem appeared on the night of the Savior's birth, it was at least a clear indicator to the magi of His fast approaching or recent birth. Herod the Great apparently made the same assumption as he questioned the magi as to "the time the star appeared" (Matthew 2:7). Note also the magi say they "saw" (past tense) the star (Matthew 2:2). The star did not first appear to the magi while they were in Jerusalem; rather, the appearance of the star prompted their journey.

After the magi finished their visit in Bethlehem and left for their own country "by another way" (Matthew 2:12), Herod

the Great ordered the killing of all the male children in the region who were two years of age and younger. The assumption Herod was simply allowing a very large margin for error to be sure to kill the Baby is wrong. Herod's actions were very precise.

Scripture does not record the full extent or detail of the conversation between Herod the Great and the magi. It is reasonable to think Herod would have asked if there were other signs or reasons to believe this star represented the birth of a Jewish king; or the magi may have volunteered to Herod all the wonderful things pointing them to the Child's birth. Remember, at this point, the magi believed, or at least pretended to believe, Herod shared their joy and wanted to pay homage along with them.

Is it coincidence Herod the Great had all the male babies killed who were two years old and younger? Or, rather, do these murders indicate that, along with the magi, Herod the Great also saw the star as the culmination of signs, not the lone beacon? Maybe all the prophecies, the earlier astronomical indicators, and finally the star, marked a place and a period of time for the birth in all their minds. Likely, the magi told Herod their story including the early indicators. Whatever was said, it was enough information to determine a date from which to kill the baby boys. This timing puzzle will be evaluated further in the next chapter.

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Duration and Continuity of the Star's Visibility

The star was visible for a significant period. It was visible before the magi started their journey and at its end. Logically, it was in the sky for a period of at least a month and very likely two months or more, matching the oriental records of what must have been the star.

If the star were a nova, it could have appeared, diminished in power so it was not visible to the naked eye, and then increased in power to become visible again. The visibility of objects in the sky is affected by their brightness in relation to other objects in the sky and their proximity to them.

The sun may block, or its brightness usually overwhelms the light of the stars, making them invisible during the day. The moon may do the same in the night sky. While stars are close to a bright moon, especially a full moon, they can become temporarily invisible unless specialized instruments are used. Even in the new moon stage, when the moon is completely dark, it temporarily blocks the view of objects behind it.

While it would be normal for the moon to block an object in the sky for a period of less than an hour, it would not hide an object for the whole night. The biggest obstacle to viewing the night sky is the Earth itself as its rotation blocks half the universe from view at any given time. Cloud cover can, of course, also obstruct the view of a star.

There were, therefore, periods the Star of Bethlehem was not visible to the magi. In fact, Scripture suggests the Star of Bethlehem reappeared at one crucial point. Please note Matthew 2:10 says, “And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” One might misunderstand and think this statement refers to their first sighting of the star. Rather, this statement was made by the magi after they visited Herod and while they were in Jerusalem.

The first sighting of the star by the magi before their trip would have likely produced amazement and intellectual curiosity rather than “exceedingly great joy.” However, the star’s disappearance from sight for a time may have caused them to fear their chance to see the newborn King had vanished as well. Now imagine that, after finishing the

meeting with King Herod, the star reappeared. It is no wonder they had "exceedingly great joy." A normal reaction would have been the belief God Himself was smiling on their efforts and had kept the star glowing, signifying they were not too late. As a bonus, it could direct them on the last leg of their journey.

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Chapter 10 Summary

The Star of Bethlehem was not a planet, a conjunction of planets, a meteor, or a comet by our current definition. It could not have been a star that was normally seen in the night sky, or it would not have triggered the magi to make an unanticipated trip. Although it could have been supernatural, that was not necessary as a God had ordained a natural astronomical event.

Before the star's appearance, there had been signals both in prophecy and in the sky preparing the magi for the announcement of the birth of the King. The star appeared around the time of Christ's birth and inspired their journey to see Him. While not visible during the entire period of the magi's journey, it was visible for much of the time. The star shone over a significant period of time, extending through the magi's visit with Christ's family.

Chapter 11
Panic and Planning in Jerusalem

The Strategy of the Magi Informed by Reason and Revelation

The People in Turmoil; the Magi Trapped

The Schemes of Herod

… and we have come to worship Him. And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophets, 'And you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler, who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:2b-6)

The Strategy of the Magi Informed by Reason and Revelation

To understand the words and actions of both Herod the Great and the magi, one must understand who they were and the historical political context. All these men were highly educated, very intelligent, and moved among lawyers and politicians on a regular basis. They were accustomed to schemes and political intrigue.

It is logical to assume that for days prior to their arrival in Jerusalem the magi would have been gathering information about King Herod, the current political situation, and what, if anything, the local people knew of their new prophesied King. These men were not just travelers, they were foreign dignitaries from the east. They would not have wanted to enter a major foreign city

ignorant of the state of affairs. It is very likely the magi already understood the regulation that even a foreigner (SHW #1616, גֵּר, pronounced "ger") was not to travel in Israel on a Sabbath (Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14). If not, someone would have, either through kindness or a sense of legalism, explained this regulation. Since their trip was to worship and honor the "King of the Jews," logic suggests they would not want to transgress His rules in the process.

Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the magi sought "He who is born King of the Jews." Contemporary readers might wonder if the magi understood which destiny awaited this Baby: earthy political power, or religious supremacy. Yet "King of the Jews" included, and would have been understood to mean, both civic and spiritual authority in that place and time. During the period they were intertwined. Such a separation of these realms would not have existed in their minds. Egyptian, Persian, and other empires including Rome often considered their kings deities. Roman rulers since Augustus were considered both the supreme political and religious authority within the empire. There was even specific prophesy that a Jewish king would have absolute authority. Roman historian Tacitus in work (Tacitus 5, 13) records this hope in the East of a King.

> Some few put a fearful meaning on these events, but in most there was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judæa, were to acquire **universal** empire. (bolding added)

The magi sought directions to the New King apart from Herod's palace. Their action could be rationalized. Perhaps the magi assumed many in Jerusalem were aware of the birth of the New King and that it was unnecessary to

trouble any governmental leaders. Beyond that, they could justify to themselves, it would be quite presumptuous to seek an appointment with King Herod. Besides, getting the information on the streets would have been quickest and maybe they hoped to get out of town before evening. Yet all these somewhat naïve suggestions ignore the recent political history within Herod's kingdom with its implications.

The southeastern border of the Roman empire had shifted back and forth as the result of conflicts with the Parthian empire to the east. The conflicts between Rome and the Parthians ebbed and flowed from 54 B.C. until A.D. 217. Hostilities included the Parthians' support for Brutus and Cassius in their civil war against Mark Anthony and Octavian (Augustus), the benefactors of Herod. Soon after their Roman allies lost the civil war, the Parthians supported one Maccabean brother against another brother and his ally Herod himself. The brother with his Parthian allies had conquered Jerusalem causing Herod to flee and to travel to Rome. Rome responded to the situation and Herod's request for help with an army. A Roman general with his legion were sent in support of Herod to deliver the city to his control.

Always paranoid Herod had in this case a valid reason for extreme concern with the arrival of the magi, elites from the east, to visit. Especially since they were seeking a new king within his territory!

The magi trying to bypass Herod was almost certainly not the result of trying to be efficient or polite. Avoiding the king was probably strategic and had its own dangers. Their decision could have been taken as an insult to Herod as it implied the New King was not in his home and from within his family. It could have also been very offensive to Herod as their act of looking for a new king could have inspired the people to hope that their days of being dominated by Herod's lineage were coming to an end. Further, although over thirty years had passed since

Herod's war with the Parthians, even a rational king would have been alert and concerned. And "rational" might not be the best description of Herod the Great.

The magi risked such offenses, no doubt hoping to avoid Herod. It is safe to assume, they understood King Herod would not be pleased to hear of the arrival of "The King" whose power would exceed or replace his own. It was common knowledge well beyond Jerusalem that Herod was a murdering madman. His reputation had reached all the way to Rome where the emperor is reported to have said, "It is safer to be Herod's pig than his son."

Due to Herod's misplaced jealousy, by the time the magi arrived in Jerusalem, Herod had executed the wife he loved. Then he looked for her many nights saying he heard her calling. He had also already executed two of his sons because of paranoia. A third son would meet the same fate in a year-and-a-half. The magi were educated and astute enough to realize their presence was risky to them and to those they would be visiting. As hard as their attempt would have been, being part of a large group, it seems they wanted to be discreet.

While the magi sought information where they needed to proceed to see the New King, they also needed supplies bought and made ready as quickly as possible. At that point, they may have hoped to leave Jerusalem quickly. Neither did not know that their ultimate destination would have had adequate supplies available for them. They could not gamble with the refit of their caravan.

The People in Turmoil; the Magi Trapped

The people of Jerusalem were probably anxious before the magi arrived. The supernova that was the Star of Bethlehem was a bright object, as implied by the length of its visibility and the term used by the Chinese to describe it.[1] Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred before c. A.D.

108, documented, in a romanticized description, that the Star of Bethlehem was very bright.[2] Astronomical events were generally believed to imply major changes, including political upheaval. It is also probable discussion of the birth of Messiah was sweeping through the faithful in the city, as the shepherds' praises spread among the people (Luke 2:20).

It is likely the shepherds' report had reached the Temple and triggered Simeon and Anna to expect Mary and the Baby in the Temple on the morning of specific day her purification was mandated by God's law. That day was May 26 of 5 B.C. a Friday. On it Simeon, an old man to whom God spoke, held the Baby and provided his testimony Jesus was Messiah (Luke 2:25-32). Shortly afterward, Anna, an old woman whose faithfulness was seen daily in the Temple, greeted the family. She then added her testimony, telling all who looked for the Messiah that He, Jesus, had been born (Luke 2:38).

Therefore, when the magi arrived in town, as will be shown on almost certainly the same date of May 26th, many had their beliefs about the star and the reports they had heard about the birth confirmed. Many Jews would have been excited, but all the city went into turmoil. No one could predict what irrational action Herod might take.

The magi would have been wise enough to pick up the excitement and the tension as they moved among the people and asked questions. The anxiety of the people probably enhanced their desire to leave Jerusalem as quickly as possible. Yet their immediate departure was prevented due to Herod's "request" for a meeting. The magi were in a difficult situation. They needed to act carefully, both during their meeting and afterwards.

Based upon clues in Scripture, God provided the magi with crucial specific instructions that night after their meeting with Herod. Matthew 2:12 records that God warned the magi in a dream not to return to Herod after

seeing the Baby and to take a different way home. This verse includes SGW #5537, χρηματισθέντες, pronounced "chrēmatisthentes." This word can be translated as "to warn," "to instruct," "to reveal," or "to be called." It appears in this verse in the aorist participle passive form meaning "having been warned" by someone or something, in this case, by God through a dream.

Note the Biblical narrative presents this information after the magi are in the presence of the family. Yet that is not when the dream occurred. The information is **not** rendered in the present tense, the aorist tense, or the present participle form. Any of these structures could have been used to imply the dream occurred at that time, when they were in Bethlehem. Instead, using the aorist participle passive form informs that they had received the dream earlier.

The Greek verb structure allows the possibility the magi had already received the dream before they arrived in Jerusalem. However, the dream warned them not to "return" to Herod. Such a wording strongly implies the dream was received on the one night that was after visiting with Herod and before the magi's trip to Bethlehem.

The most logical timing for the dream was Friday night, a Sabbath night, based upon the timing which will be shown. Such timing fits the Greek textual structure nicely, matches the record of Scripture which does not indicate the magi slept even part of a night in Bethlehem, and – after being in the presence of such an evil man – would have been clearly understood and readily obeyed.

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Then Herod, having secretly called the magi, inquired of them exactly the time of the star's appearing. And having sent them to Bethlehem he said, "Having gone search

carefully regarding the Child. Then when you have discovered [Him} you report again to me so that I also, having come, may worship Him. (Matthew 2:7-8 *JJM*)

The Schemes of Herod

Although Herod was half Jewish, He was a Hellenistic Roman ruler. He would have regarded events in the sky as omens – messages from the gods. Nevertheless, since Herod did not ask for the meeting with the religious leaders concerning Messiah's birthplace until the magi arrived, it can be assumed he did not realize the star had announced the King's birth. When the magi arrived, Herod took the appearance of the supernova very seriously. No doubt hearing of the question the magi had been asking about a New King, Herod would have been terrified and infuriated.

Herod first called for a meeting with the religious leaders to ascertain "where" the Messiah was to be born. It included "all the chief priest and scribes." And although it was not "secret," this meeting did not include the magi. Herod was compartmentalizing information. Herod wanted information, but he did not want to have it shared. Specifically, he did not want the religious leaders to gain the additional astronomical information regarding the timing of the birth. Neither did Herod want the magi aware of Jewish prophecies concerning the birth, if the men were not already award of these revelations. Herod might also have been concerned that the religious leaders' body language might have expressed fear of Herod and have tipped off his lies to the magi.

After the meeting with the religious leaders, Herod called the magi to a subsequent secret meeting to discuss "when" the Baby could have been born. Notice he did not bring Scripture into the discussion, even to ask if it provided clues to the timing of the birth. He probably had already made an assumption, approximating the timing of the

birth based upon the appearance of the supernova. He was seeking more specificity from the magi to perhaps adjust his "target range" of murders he probably was already contemplating.

The fact that the meeting was in secret provides valuable timing information. Herod's palace was in the middle of Jerusalem. People would have been in the streets there every day and almost every evening, providing only one logical opportunity to sneak the magi into Herod's home. On the night of the weekly Sabbath everyone would have been in their home sharing the meal. After the meal every business would be closed. There would be no public activities or entertainment. Logically, people remained in their homes with their families. It was at this time, and probably only at this time, the magi could have been sneaked into a meeting with Herod.

In addition to wanting more details regarding the timing of Messiah's birth, Herod's meeting with the magi was to gain assistance in finding the Child. At the close of the meeting, Herod sent the magi away with feigned joy, implied friendship, and clear instructions for at least some of them to personally report back to him the Child's location. Despite the false pleasantries, notice the direct command, "you report back to me" as soon as the child is found.

Bethlehem was only five miles south south-west of Jerusalem. In that day it was a village of a couple hundred people. Once the magi could travel, Herod expected a quick report of the Child's exact location, so, as he had lied, he could "go and worship him." Herod's expression of urgency was consistent with his ruse. The magi were reporting what they correctly understood to be the fulfillment of Messianic prophesy. The Messiah was worthy of worship. To delay worship would be disrespectful for even a king. Logically, he anticipated knowing where the Baby was within a few hours of the magi's departure.

What Herod really wanted, “as soon as possible,” was the death of the New King. No doubt immediately after his meeting with the magi, in anticipation of prompt notification, Herod set plans in order to dispatch troops to kill the Child. After setting his trap, He would have anxiously awaited a report.

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Chapter 11 Summary

The visit of the magi to Jerusalem to learn the location of the New King was conducted in a politically charged environment. Herod had a bloody history with the kingdom of the east. Elites visiting from the east was a serious matter.

The magi tried and failed to avoid King Herod. Probably by Satanic design, the terror of the people regarding their earthly king distracted them from the growing reports of the birth of their Heavenly King. Then the sorrow Herod caused by the murder of many children stemmed the joyful message of the Savior’s birth.

The magi had to be very careful. Herod was mentally unstable, but even a rational king would have had a valid reason to be concerned. Receiving God’s commands provided the guidance necessary to direct the magi to flee without creating an international incident and to provide the family the chance to escape the rage of Herod the Great.

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Chapter 12
The Star of Bethlehem and Its Timing

The Star of Bethlehem as a Celestial Pointer

The Day of the Week the Magi Went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem

The Date of the Magi's Trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and the Family's Escape to Egypt

No Time to Sleep!

Plans Made in Darkness Used to Shine the Light of God's Glory

An Effort by the Early Church to Document the Star of Bethlehem

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And having heard the king, they were sent on their way. And behold! The star which they recognized in the east went before them until having arrived it was situated vertically over where the child was.

Now having discerned the star they rejoiced – exceedingly great joy. (Matthew 2:9-10 *JJM*)

The Star of Bethlehem as a Celestial Pointer

Scripture does not say the star first appeared the night of Christ's birth. It does imply the magi asserted to Herod the day of the birth based upon the star. It does not say the star led the magi on a westward trek from some area east of Israel to Jerusalem. Matthew 2:9 says the star "went before" the magi on their way from Jerusalem to the home where the young Child was in Bethlehem. The appearance

of movement, however, was provided by the movement of Earth and the magi's movement on a road taking them south southwest from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, not the movement of the supernova.

The errant assumption that the star itself was moving in the night sky is not just due to misunderstanding "went before" used in Matthew 2:9. Unfortunately, it is supported by the choice to render SGW #2476, ἵστημι, pronounced "histémi," as though it was presented in the verse in the "active" voice as "stood over." This choice allows for a metaphorical understanding as though the star was a living thing with its own will. However, this word appears here in Matthew 2:9 in its aorist indicative passive form, ἐστάθη, pronounced "estathē. It is more precisely rendered here as "situated vertically." This verb means something was positioned to remain in a vertical position. It has an almost identical definition with SGW #5087, τίθημι, transliterated and pronounced "tithémi" except that "tithémi" means to be positioned or remain in a horizontal position.

What Matthew is communicating is that the star, which was as discussed, an "asymmetric supernova" had its "tail" pointed downward at the location of the Child by the action of Another Being when the magi arrived at the northern edge of Bethlehem where the family was staying. (See the appendix "**Where Mary Gave Birth**.") God was pointing at His Son.

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The Day of the Week the Magi Went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem

And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned by

God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

The arrival of a caravan of foreign dignitaries would have been quite uncommon to Bethlehem. There was a trade route between Jerusalem and Egypt that traversed through the region. However, Bethlehem was not along the path. Bethlehem was situated at the top of a hill that would have been out of the way for a traveler between the two destinations.

A religiously informed person would have been aware of the Messianic prophecy concerning Bethlehem. And most of the residents probably heard the shepherds' stories about Messiah's birth, or at least the gossip about their accounts. Yet even the most oblivious person would assume a politically significant event was occurring when the magi arrived.

Assuming a night arrival, as Scripture describes it, this best opportunity for a visit and escape still did not allow many hours of safety for a gathering. With the arrival of morning, the regular activity among the people of Bethlehem would have taken some of them the five-mile trek to Jerusalem. No doubt they would have discussed the arrival and departure of a caravan of foreign dignitaries that had visited their village as they spoke to people in Jerusalem. Such information would certainly have spread quickly and reached Herod through a soldier or a citizen who was loyal to him. If Herod had not already been informed of the magi's rebellion or had his patience run out resulting in the sending of his troops, such gossip certainly would have triggered this action. There is no way the family stayed long in Bethlehem after the arrival of the magi without the slaughter of their Child.

There is no way Herod would permit a Baby destined to be King to live an extra day and risk someone fleeing with Him to protect Him. The family would not have had a next day and part of a next night in Bethlehem before Herod's

wrath fell upon the infant boys. It is probable Herod's slaughter of the boys in Bethlehem began not long after the magi and the family left the village on the night the magi arrived.

Consider the information from another perspective. Many people of Jerusalem would have heard about the magi's presence and their question. They certainly would have understood the gravity of the situation. Even if they had not heard of Herod's meeting with the religious leaders or his "secret" meeting with the magi, because of Herod's reputation they would have assumed his reaction to the magi's question could be deadly.

Anyone longing for the arrival of Messiah would have known Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem and would have been terrified of what their insane ruler would do! It is reasonable to think someone in Jerusalem would as soon as possible run to Bethlehem to report that "all the city," which included Herod, was in an uproar. If the magi did not warn Joseph of the danger that night, one would hope someone else would have.

While it is true the star went before them on their trip to Bethlehem, that was God's wonderful surprise for them, it was not something the magi had counting on. Based upon their reaction to seeing the star, it had been blocked from their view for a period of time. The magi were ecstatic to see the star as they packed to leave Jerusalem. It had faded significantly by that time and was dimly visible close to the horizon. Having received their destination information, being sent with urgency by King Herod, and sensing the danger, the magi left for Bethlehem as soon as the Sabbath was past. No doubt sharing the joy of the moment, God had uncovered the star to guide the troop, as it shone through the darkness of night.

Having logically already restocked their caravan, once the Sabbath ended at dusk Saturday allowing labor and travel, they made their night-trip to Bethlehem. Due to the

magi's dream, probably reinforced by the reaction of the people and their own perception, the magi moved quickly. They would have known Herod could decide to not wait for information but dispatch troops at any time using their presence as the indicator of which child to kill. The magi would have understood, not only that their presence put the family at risk, but their disobedience to Herod in failing to send word immediately would have compounded the risk they brought to the family.

They arrived, presented their gifts, worshiped, had a short visit that passed along their astronomical information and the story of their visit with Herod, and departed as instructed. There is no reason to believe the magi would have camped in Bethlehem. Traveling at night was God's provision of cover, both for the magi's escape southeast, and for the family's escape southwest to Egypt.

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The Date of the Magi's Trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and the Family's Escape to Egypt

Because Jesus' birth was on 7 *Nisan*, the evening of April 13, Mary's purification was required to be May 26th. She fulfilled this obligation, as the visit with Simeon and Anna document (Luke 2:25-38). Had the family's plans not been interrupted, their next obligation would have been on June 11 with the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost. With so few days, a round trip to Nazareth would certainly have been impractical.

Had the family participated in Pentecost, they would have left Bethlehem for Jerusalem on Friday June 10th, while it was still legal to walk that far before Sabbath began at dusk. The High Sabbath of Pentecost that began Saturday at dusk would also have prevented such a long walk.

Logically they would have departed from Jerusalem for

Nazareth Sunday morning June 12th. Beyond the Sabbath rules, it would have been crazy to add 10 more miles of walking before they continued on their already brutally long trek north to Nazareth. Clearly, since the magi worshiped Jesus in Bethlehem, it can be deduced Joseph took the family back to Bethlehem after Mary's purification and escaped from there to Egypt before June 10th. This conclusion is supported because Scripture does not say the family participated in the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem on June 11, 5 B.C. Therefore, based upon religious obligations and rules, the magi's visit had to be between May 26th and June 10th.

The other limiting factors of when the magi visited the family are based upon two factors from the science of astronomy. In order for the **position** of the star to be seem above the horizon and situated properly to "go before them" is one factor providing the limit of the last possible day for the trip. The diminished **visibility** as the supernova faded from view is the other factor that limits what nights the sky would be dark enough to see the object and make the trip as it is described in Scripture.

Position

As astronomers, the magi would not be so naïve as to believe the star was moving in the sky, but was stationary, as fellow Chinese and Korean astronomers recorded. Rather as the earth moved, the star precessed (from Latin, *praecessio*, to 'go before') with the dome of the sky during their months of travel. And, based upon the location of the supernova as recorded by the Chinese and Korean astronomers, by late May the star would have been near the horizon.

The final five-mile leg of the magi's trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem was, at a comfortable pace, about two hours. According to Scripture the star was visible going before them throughout that trip. If the magi traveled to see the New King just as the star became visible to them they would have arrived in Bethlehem before midnight, which

was south-southwest of Jerusalem.[1] The star would have been in front of them near the end of their short trip making it appear to be over Jesus' place of birth.

Specifically, for the star to appear to be leading the magi by the end of their journey they would have had to have left Jerusalem about 45 minutes before the star was due south. From the Korean and Chinese records of the star's location and the movement of Earth, it is possible to determine the star was due south on May 27th at about 10:02 p.m.[2] Therefore, the magi would have needed to have seen the star and started following it at about 9:17 p.m. on May 27th. Thus, if the magi left Jerusalem on May 27th at 9:17 p.m. the star would have been aligned in almost a southwest direction, matching their direction of travel, near the end of their trip, in accordance with the description found in Matthew 2:9. Beyond May 28th it is unlikely the star would have been visible at the proper time for the magi to have followed it from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and match the Biblical record that the star "went before them."

Just as the star had precessed before them upon seeing it in the East, it now went before them again at the end of their journey. This fact would have added to the joy of the magi and it verifies, just as Matthew 2:9 says, "…*the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them.*"

Visibility

The designation of the brightness of the sky progresses from "Daylight" to "Night" in four specified intervals. Since the star was barely visible, the start of the timing period identified as "Night," when the sky is considered dark, will be used in the following evaluation. This standard will be used since the supernova would have faded significantly within the several weeks after its appearance on March 31, by late May it would not be visible until "dark."

Again, Scripture says the star was visible during their journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. This fact can be

understood to mean it was visible during that entire journey. The star would not have been visible at the start of their trip if their trip to Bethlehem was before May 26th. On May 26th one may argue it may have been barely visible when they would have started the trip, but that evening it would have been illegal to go that far due to the Sabbath travel limitation. The magi could have traveled this leg of the trek May 27th when the Sabbath ended. On May 27th it was "Night" at 9:11[3] and probably barely dark enough to see the star.

As has already been shown, the Scriptural description of events makes the best placement of the trip to Bethlehem as immediately at the end of a weekly Sabbath. The evening of May 26th began the weekly Sabbath. If the magi had their visit with Herod after dark on the night of the Sabbath, they would have had to spend the night in Jerusalem where they could have received their dream instructing them not to return to Herod. Then, after resting during the day Saturday, they could have followed the king's direction and left for Bethlehem traveling south when the Sabbath ended Saturday evening May 27th. Traveling with the star visible in the darkness in front of them, they would have arrived at Bethlehem around 11:16 p.m. Consider the following progression chart:

Sabbath							Sabbath	
5/26	5/27	5/28	5/29	5/30	5/31	6/1	6/2	6/3
"Night" begins:								
9:10	9:11	9:12	9:13	9:14	9:14	9:15	9:16	9:17
Star leading to Bethlehem if trip starts at (p.m.):								
9:20	9:17	9:13	9:10	9:06	9:02	8:58	8:55	8:51

On June 3rd, the next Sabbath, the magi would have needed to have seen and started to follow the star at about 8:51 p.m. to match the record in Matthew, but the Jerusalem Night sky started at 9:17 p.m. on that date. According to the time frame of the Korean and Chinese

astronomers, the star was nearing the end of its visibility. The star would likely have been too faded to see it from the start of the trip to Bethlehem. Thus, the timing of the week prior is much more likely, not just because of the need to match the Biblical description, but also due to the star passing from visibility.

Some might question, "Since their instructions had already provided their destination and the magi were not expecting to see the star at that point, why did the magi not wait until morning to make the trip to Bethlehem? Travel at night is always more dangerous and arriving at night is also generally quite rude." The answer is rooted in two causes of urgency. King Herod had requested (ordered) them to get him information as quickly as possible. Moreover, the command of the Greatest King to get out of the area by a different way would have reinforced the need to complete their task and leave.

To digest the previous information, the beginning of the date-range of the magi's travel from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, could not have been before the evening of May 26th due to Mary's purification requirement being fulfilled on that date. Based upon the Scriptural information that the star was visible during the magi's trip to Bethlehem, its waning visibility, and the star's position in the sky the possible date-range of the visit ended May 28th.

If it had not been a Sabbath, the Friday evening of May 26th would have been a possible date for the family's departure to Egypt. However, due to the "secret" meeting and the dream the magi had which followed that night, the night of May 27/28 seems to be the date the family started the trip to Egypt. Further, it seems God in His kindness wanted everyone involved to have a day of rest. Because of Mary's requirement of purification from the birth of her Son, the family had already made one tiring round trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem on May 26th. The magi, their servants, and their beasts of burden certainly needed to have a rest. God's mercy allowed them all to have a day to

recovery before the magi's caravan proceeded on their long journey home and the family's long trek to Egypt and.

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Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

And he arose and took the child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet [Hosea 11:1] *might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call my Son."*

No Time to Sleep!

Regarding Joseph, he did not wave goodbye to the parting magi and have a peaceful night's sleep. Further, if Joseph had slept through the night of the magi's departure, there is no way Joseph calmly stays in Bethlehem the next day after thinking about God's instructions to the magi and hearing of the turmoil in Jerusalem. Neither does Scripture say the family left on a subsequent night after the magi left.

It seems shocking that Joseph needed to receive God's instructions in a dream for the family to flee. One would hope, at least intuitively, Joseph could have grasped the danger himself. Certainly, the family was aware of God's warning to the magi, as it must have been Mary who provided the magi's story for the Gospel writers. That story included Herod's keen interest in the Baby and his deceptive words. Even if the magi's story did not include the fearful omen of Herod's interest, one would imagine

the departure of the magi could have been instructive to Mary and Joseph.

In fairness to Joseph, he might not have gone to bed for the night at all. Perhaps with the magi's departure he sought God in prayer for specific instruction. Bowing his head, or leaning back in a chair while exhausted, sleep could have overtaken him. It is possible God made Joseph's eyes so heavy he dozed off so He could provide Joseph clear directions in a manner Joseph would best receive them. God does not speak to each of His children in the same way (Numbers 12:6-8). Scripture records that God spoke to Joseph the same way several times, through an angel in a dream.

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Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more." (Matthew 2:11-18) (underlining added)

Plans Made in Darkness Used to Shine the Light of God's Glory

After not receiving a message from the magi, Herod perceived he had been tricked. He correctly assumed a large group of people seeking one family within a town of 200-300 people would not take long. Perhaps only five to six hours after the magi left Jerusalem Herod would have expected some information. It is hard to imagine Herod

trusted anyone or would have waited long. He would have understood that allowing time to pass would open a door for the escape he dreaded. He became enraged and desperately lashed out.

Matthew 2:7 records that in the magi's meeting with Herod, he asked them when the "star" appeared. Then Matthew 2:16 says Herod killed the babies up to two years of age because of the "time" the magi provided. Herod probably had been looking for a date only several weeks earlier. The magi had expanded the range of interest to a period of time based upon precursor signs in the heavens. By including these words, Matthew provides details that are both interesting and important for those who analyze the situation carefully.

It is interesting to consider why the magi provided additional information to Herod beyond what he was requesting. It was not to convince Herod the New King had indeed been born. Their meeting was based upon that stipulation. Nor did the magi have a need to try to impress Herod with their knowledge. Sharing the information could imply the magi were deceived by Herod, if so God's instructions in a dream could be considered a correction to their delusion. More likely it implies they intended to expand the period when the Baby could have been born to give Herod the impression their search and his, if he should make one, would likely fail as the Child could well be long gone. Sane people may not have fathomed that Herod would slaughter many children born during a broad time-period in order to kill one Baby. With more than one magi present, perhaps one was gullible enough to be deceived by Herod and another magi wanted to deceive the king. This writer believes the magi were all wise enough and close enough to their associates after their long journey together that they mutually agreed to try and deceive Herod the deceiver.

While the motives behind sharing the information may be fascinating, what is important to consider is the content of

what must have been shared. Herod's actions based upon the information provide a clear answer to what that information was. Ironically, the worst human enemy of the newborn King inadvertently provided one of the most emphatic indicators of the timing of His birth. Herod the Great's reaction after being snubbed by the magi, who avoided him on their way home (Matthew 2:12), gives a rock-solid indicator of what the magi shared and a very precise time snapshot. The "time" provided by the magi pointed to in Matthew 2:16 must have been the first astronomical sign of the Messiah's birth. The earliest occurring sign the magi must have told Herod was the multiple conjunction of planets sighted in 7 B.C. This unusual conjunction's first appearance that year was in May.[4] If Herod had just met with the magi in late May of 5 B.C., as this work informs, any child born during the month of that first sign in May of 7 B.C. would have just turned two years old! The top end of the age limit set for the murder of the infant boys.

Herod the Great's decree both reveals the first sign piquing the magi's interest and it documents how long before his conversation with the magi the first sign appeared. Just as an evil act of treachery accomplished God's purpose in the Crucifixion of Christ, so too an evil act of Herod the Great provides information supporting the dating of the birthday of Christ.

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An Effort by the Early Church to Document the Star of Bethlehem

Aquila and Priscilla, disciples of Paul, likely knew at least the season of Christ's birth. Paul was perhaps one of the sources of information concerning Christ's birth about which Pope Telesphorus gave special instructions, as discussed in chapter 1.[5] Scripture and Church records document that Paul led Aquila and Priscilla to Christ, and they became instrumental in the early church in the cities

of Corinth, Ephesus, and ultimately in Rome. Their homes, in more than one city, became the centers for early churches.

Both Aquila and Priscilla made the ultimate sacrifice, being martyred together in Rome after the "great fire" of A.D. 64.[6] Their remains may have been buried in "Priscilla's Catacomb," which is recognized as being one of the first burial sites in the Roman catacombs. This catacomb is named after Priscilla Pudens who was the wife of Senator Quintus Cornelius Pudens, and quite possibly the mother or aunt of Aquila's wife Priscilla mentioned in Scripture.[7] The catacomb is an important monument and time capsule of the early church.

Amazingly, it contains a coded message proving Paul's disciples knew about the timing of Christ's birth. On the ceiling above the burial site of nine early saints is a double painting. This painting was analyzed by Carolyn M. Beehler, an accomplished artist and teacher at the Lay School of Religion at Yale Divinity School. Due to her knowledge of Aquila and Priscilla and their lineage, as well as her knowledge of art, she made a wonderful and too-little recognized discovery.

One part of the double painting is of the "Good Shepherd" with a lamb over his shoulders and two sheep at his sides. Fruit trees are also on each side of the Good Shepherd. The second part of the double painting, perpendicular to the first, contains the first "Madonna and Child" known to have been painted. Next to the mother and Child in the painting is a man pointing up at fruit on a tree. These things are obvious. What is not obvious is the message encoded in the paintings.

Beehler believed the painting was done or directed by a trained astronomer. This knowledge guided her to explore the fruit in the painting further.[8] Dorrit Hoffleit, PhD in Astronomy, as well as Father Martin McCarthy, astronomer for the Vatican, recognized the hand of a trained astronomer at work in the painting[9], confirming Beehler's suspicions. Beehler's discovery was published in journals including the Smithsonian magazine.[10]

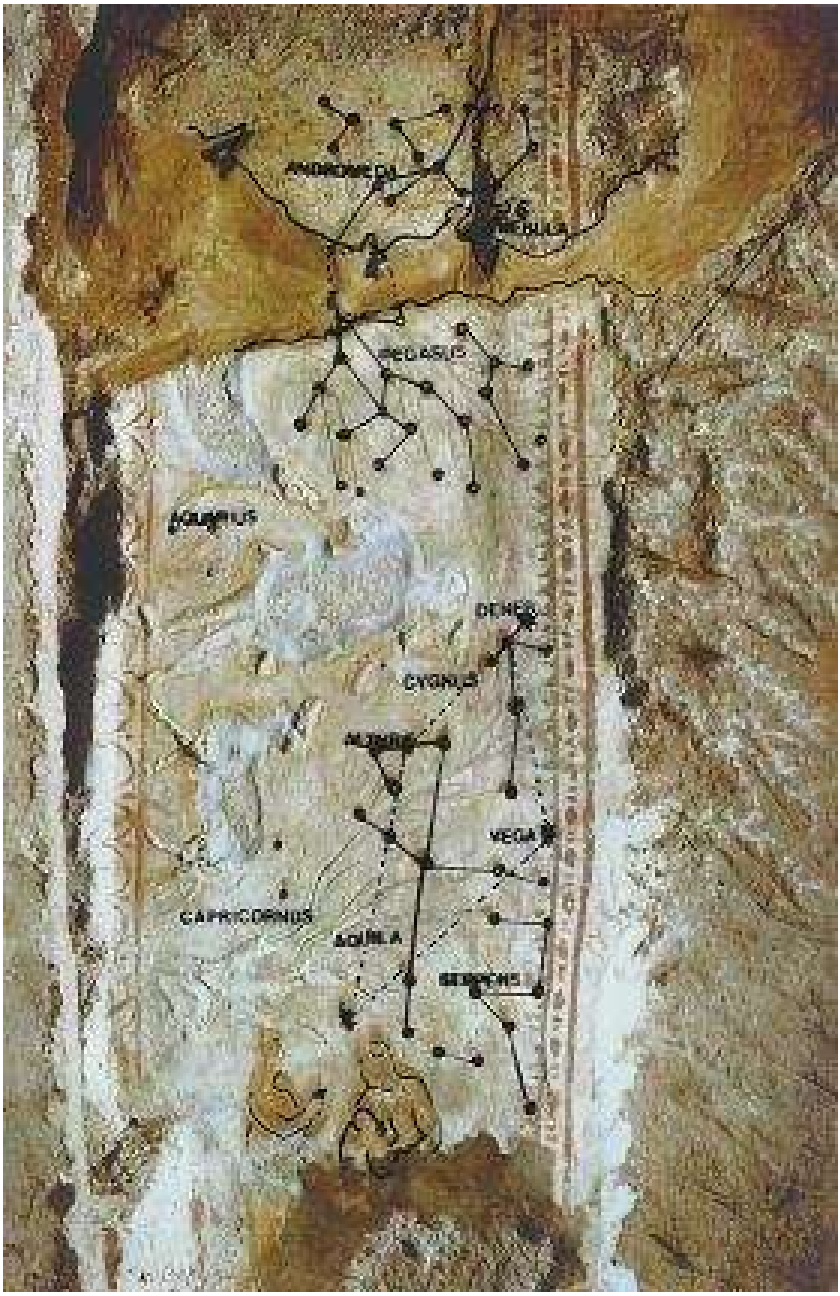
The astronomer who guided the painting, suggested to be a loving grandson, used the crypt as a place to encode knowledge that had to be preserved in case their circle of friends all died the same way as Priscilla and Aquila. The astronomer guided the painting of the fruit on the tree to be placed at the locations of stars in the night sky. Using a fruit tree was subterfuge, as the study of astrology and astronomy were illegal under Roman law.

The pagans of Rome believed the stars predicted the future. Only the emperor, through his approved and controlled interpreters, was allowed to speak for the stars. On the other hand, astrology and even the science of astronomy were rejected by many in the early church as they were considered idolatry.[11]

The fruit (stars) were laid out perfectly with one exception. The painting on the ceiling contained one very special additional representation of a star on the edge of the constellation Aquila. The position of this extra star in the painting is just over Mary's head. Its position in the night sky depicted on the ceiling is where the Chinese documented their "broom star" of spring 5 B.C., which the information suggests was an asymmetrical supernova.[12]

Beehler's proposal is convincing. In this painting, an astronomer covertly recorded above the head of Mary and the Christ child the star that announced Christ's birth.[13] Further, this writer shares Beehler's belief the star was a supernova that now exists as a pulsar within that area of the universe matching the position of the Star of

Bethlehem in the double painting.

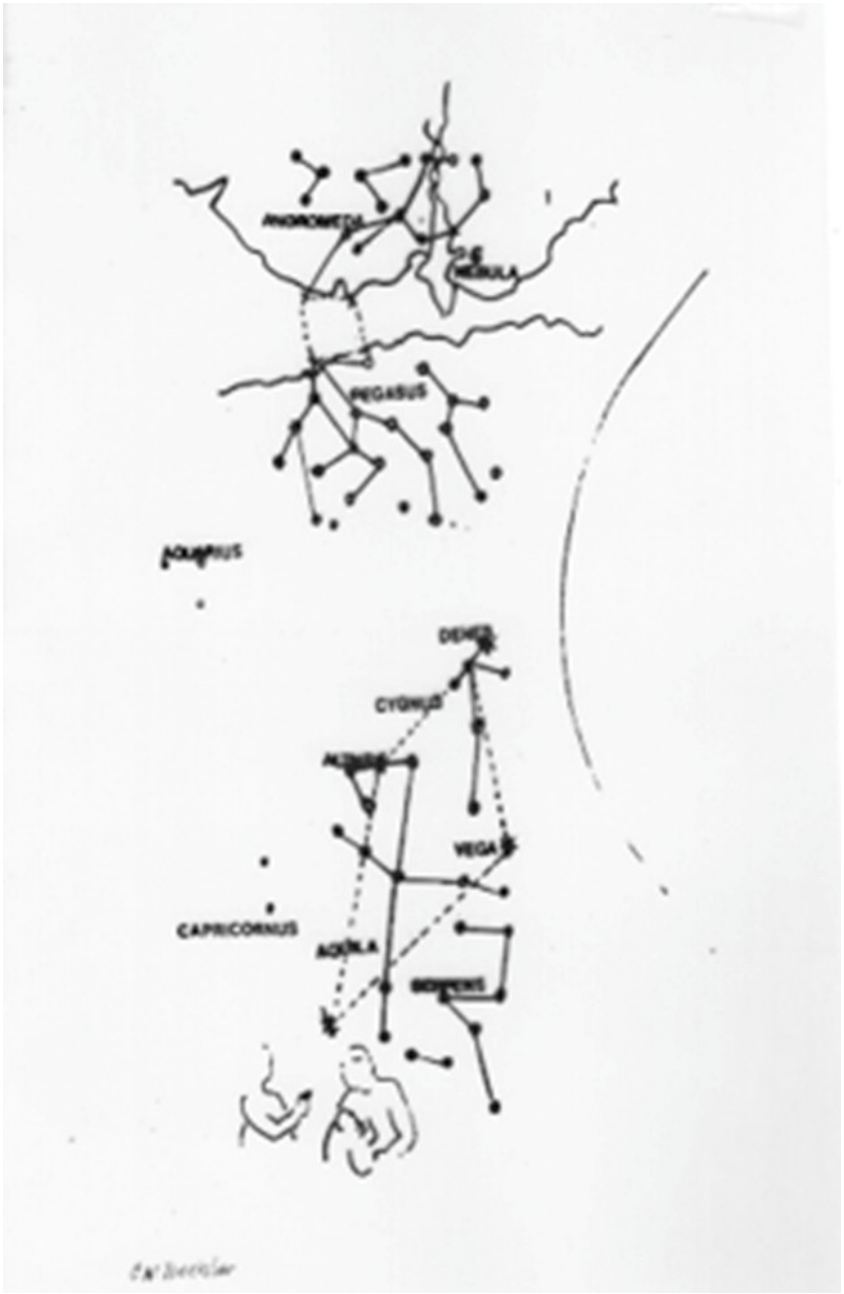


The existence of this painting in a tomb of saints dating to the early second century proves the Church at that time knew when Christ was born. It is, therefore, no surprise the early Church leader, Pope Telesphorus, would enshrine the night of Christ's birth with special instructions for worship.

Jews of the first century and today, typically do not celebrate birthdays.[14] Despite this fact, it seems one or all three of the Apostles John, Peter, and Paul passed on information about Jesus' birth and the Star of Bethlehem. Paul, who was raised in the gentile city of Tarsus in southern Turkey, focused upon reaching the gentiles for Christ. His background and focus might explain why his ministry partner, Luke, says so much about Christ's birth.

Luke's Gospel is the only source for most of the personal details regarding Christ's birth. He records what the angel said to Mary, what Elizabeth said to Mary, and Mary's reactions to these wonders. Where did Luke, and his partner Paul, get such intimate information? As suggested earlier, it must have been Mary herself. No one would know better the timing of the birth of Christ. She would have also had the opportunity to learn from the magi about the star.

God preserved the details of Christ's birth through many including Mary, the Apostles, astronomers, a catacomb painter, historians, Carolyn Beehler, and others.


ANDROMEDA
PEGASUS
CYGNUS
VEGA
CAPRICORNUS
AQUILA

Theological Perspective on the Star of Bethlehem

Bethlehem's Star is now a binary pulsar comprised from two neutron stars, remains of supernovas, circling each other. It is visible today with the correct instruments.

This pulsar is 20,870 light years away from Earth. Therefore, the perfect timing of the appearance on Earth of the supernova to guide the magi to Christ was triggered 20,870 years before the magi saw the star. God's redemption plan, including Christ's sacrifice, were from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

The Author(s) of the Book of Hebrews

Carolyn Beehler's pursuit of the authorship of the book of Hebrews led to the discovery of the meaning of the painting in the Priscilla Catacomb. Her daughter, Dana B. Goward compiled and edited her writings resulting in a fascinating book: *The Priscilla Revelation and the Discovery of the Apple Constellation.* It outlines the historical record related to Priscilla and Aquila, and Beehler's belief Priscilla was the primary author of Hebrews. Mrs. Goward has graciously permitted use of her mother's photograph and analysis in this book.

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Chapter 12 Summary

The evidence reveals the "Star of Bethlehem" was an asymmetrical supernova, matching its description in Scripture. According to Korean astronomers, this object appeared March 31; Chinese astronomers recorded it was in 5 B.C. Both the Korean and Chinese records document the same location of the supernova. A double painting on the ceiling of a catacomb in Rome proves the early church knew where the star appeared in the heavens that announced Christ's birth. The painting verifies the Star of Bethlehem was the supernova documented by the Koreans and Chinese.

The family was still in Bethlehem when the magi arrived as they were waiting to fulfill their responsibilities for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) before returning to Nazareth. This extended stay allowed them to receive the magi and their gifts. Due to limitations of the supernova's visibility, both because it was waning and its position in the night sky, there are only a few days the magi's trip to Bethlehem would have matched the account in Scripture. Of those days the most logical for the family's departure for Egypt was in the dark hours after midnight began May 28, 5 B.C. The timing of the magi's trip to Bethlehem fits perfectly with the star's visibility, its location in the night sky, and that the rotation of Earth would provide the appearance the star "went before them" on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to visit the King.

Herod's actions document the magi considered the major astrological events of 7 – 5 B.C. to be precursors to the birth of the King.

Section III
Christ's Birth Date Confirmed Through the Dating of His Ministry and Crucifixion

This section of the book veers from the first two. In sections I and II the text advanced through one Gospel at a time in verse order to learn about Christ's birthday. This section is an examination of passages from the Old and New Testaments that point precisely to the time of the beginning of Christ's ministry. The length of Christ's ministry will also be documented, allowing the date of His Crucifixion to be determined. Next, consideration will be given to the timing of His Resurrection. As these points are established, the principle of subtraction can be used to confirm Christ's birthday.

Why the Information in this Section Is Important

The dating of Christ's birth, when He started His ministry, when He was crucified, and when His Resurrection occurred anchor the reality of Christ's life and ministry to history. This knowledge encourages our belief both in the Lord and His message.

The information in this section reinforces our faith in both Christ's Divinity and humanity. It defends the accuracy of Scripture by showing how the Scriptural accounts of Christ's life fit with each other and history.

Knowledge defends truth. Defending truth aids those who seek it.

Chapter 13
A Date Stamp Posted in the New Testament
(John 2:19-20)

John 2:19-20 Documents the Year Christ's Ministry Began

The Starting Year of Herod the Great's Reign and When Preparations for the Temple Began

The Special Event During Which Temple Construction Preparations Begin

The Beginning of Temple Construction

The Year of Christ's Conversation with the Religious Leaders

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Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"
(John 2:19-20).

John 2:19-20 Documents the Year Christ's Ministry Began

Jesus' words were always intentional. On this occasion it seems His words had several purposes. First, they are His prophecy of His death and Resurrection. Second, they provide the length of time He would be in the grave, which in turn provide information to verify both the day and time of His burial and His Resurrection.

Third, His words link Him as a parallel to the first two Temples – dwellings of God – identifying Him as the Third Temple. His body is the ultimate Temple or Dwelling of

God, not a building made by human hands. This understanding paves the way for the Jews to comprehend their own Talmudic prophetic linkage of Christ's conception with the date of the destruction of the first two Temples.

And fourth, Christ's words prompted the response of the religious leaders which document the year His ministry began. Jesus always knew how people would respond to His words. Therefore, it must have been part of His plan to illicit their response that identified this divinely appointed time.

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the religious leaders' words and the date they identify. Understanding the meaning of their words requires deciphering a series of pieces of information. The first step is understanding what they were saying in their original context as recorded in the Greek text.

This evaluation must be done to avoid misunderstanding the meaning of "was built" regarding the Temple in John 2:20. The religious leaders' statement recorded in this verse contained above does not mean the Temple was completed. It was not, nor would it be, until the procuratorship of Albinus, A.D. 62-64.[1] What the Jews were saying was that the progress made thus far on the Temple had taken 46 years.

The Greek verb tense of "was built" in John 2:20 is Aorist Indicative Passive. This structure allows for the mistaken belief the religious leaders were saying the work had already been **completed** 46 years before this conversation occurred. This position requires the assumption that the religious leaders regarded the Temple construction as being only the finishing of the inner part of the Temple and not the Temple as a whole. Yet the context seems clear that the point they were making was that the Temple in all its parts was immense and required a vast amount of work over a long period of time.

The inner section of the temple itself was only a small part of the entire structure and was completed just eighteen months after the start of the construction project. The result of the erroneous assumption the leaders were discussing only the inner Temple pushes the date of the conversation with Jesus forward by eighteen months, which is convenient based upon contemporary misunderstanding of the dating of Christ's ministry on Earth. The timing of the construction of the inner Temple, and the Temple as a whole are explained later in a quotation from Josephus.

Some correctly understand the Greek verb tense in John 2:20 means the work on the Temple was **continuing** when the religious leaders confronted Jesus. However, among those correctly understanding the Greek verb tense, are some who misunderstand the point from which to count the 46-year period of work that had been completed at that point. They believe that the continuing work should be marked from the completion of the inner Temple. This error also moves the date of the conversation forward eighteen months, likely due to the same motive.

There are numerous other analytical mistakes and misunderstandings regarding John 2:19-20 and Josephus' writings concerning Herod's reign and the temple construction.[2] Interpreting Josephus' writings accurately matters since it is from his writings the Temple's dating is derived. Again, these writings will be examined later in this chapter.

Note that the two errors just discussed and all the errors presented in other texts concerning the timing of Christ's ministry have a common denominator. They all push the dating of Jesus' conversation forward. In so doing they accommodate the contemporary prejudice toward a later birth of Christ and the belief His ministry was longer than supported by Scripture and early church history. These misunderstandings have also supported the belief the Crucifixion of Christ was later than A.D. 28, as Clement of

Alexandria recorded, which is supported by other ancient Church fathers mentioned in chapter 1 and with additional proof in a later chapter.

Nevertheless, having set aside misunderstandings of the Greek text and assumptions regarding its meaning, it is possible to decipher the words of John 2:19-20 and to discern Josephus' writings. Understanding these statements, along with when Herod the Great's reign began, allows the identification of when construction began on the Temple and when 46 years of work had been completed. This knowledge enables the identification of the date on which the conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders recorded in John 2 occurred. This point identifies the starting year of Christ's public ministry.

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The Starting Year of Herod the Great's Reign and When Preparations for the Temple Began

Many have held the beginning of Herod the Great's reign must be counted from when he conquered Jerusalem. This presupposition is driven by a desire for a later dating of Herod's reign to fit the theories regarding a later year of the Crucifixion. The belief Herod's reign began with the conquest of Jerusalem marks the inception of the reign of Herod the Great as July 37 B.C. However, the beginning of Herod's reign is actually the week of September 19-26, 40 B.C. when he was named king over Galilee and Judea by Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) and installed by the Senate. Therefore, the correct point to mark the beginning of Herod's reign and its relation to the Temple's construction is that week as explained in detail in the appendix to this book entitled: "**Herod the Great's Years of Reign and Date of Death**."

Josephus' dating recording the Temple's construction was done from the perspective of the Syrian Region and its

civic calendar, which paralleled the Hebrew calendar. He was very clear to count Herod the Great's reign from when these calendars began their years in the fall. He credited Herod's reign based upon the nonaccession-year dating system used in that region, as well as most of Jewish history. This system recognized the several days Herod served before the year's end on September 29th as a full year. Josephus then continued to date the years of Herod's reign from the first day of *Dios* (Macedonian name) or *Tishrei* (Hebrew name) in the fall based upon this regnal system.[3] For further study of calendars and dating see the appendix, "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**."

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The Special Event During Which Temple Construction Preparations Begin

The preparations for building the Temple began with a speech during Herod's eighteenth year of reign as king, which was October 3, 24 B.C. – September 20, 23 B.C. Here is the pertinent section of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* book 15, chapter 11, 1-2 that presents how the construction of the Temple came about. (comments within brackets are added for clarity):

> And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign [24/23 B.C.], and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it large in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection, and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him; [the following sentence is a flashback explaining how Herod the Great got to this point] but as he knew the multitude were not ready nor willing to assist him in so vast a design, he thought to

> prepare them first by making a speech to them, and then set about the work itself; so he called them together, and spake thus to them; --- [The following is the speech Herod the Great gave to the people to begin the preparations: first in their attitudes, second to gather materials, third to train the priests for the physical tasks.] And this was the speech which Herod made to them: but still this speech affrighted many of the people, as being unexpected by them, and because it seemed incredible, it did not encourage them, but put a damp [sic] upon them, for they were afraid that he would pull down the whole edifice, and not be able to bring his intentions to perfection for its rebuilding; and this danger appeared to them to be very great, and vastness of the undertaking to be such as could hardly be accomplished. But while they were in this disposition, the king encouraged them, and told them he would not pull down the temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up entirely again. And as he promised them this beforehand, so he did not break his word with them, but got ready a thousand wagons that were to bring stones for the building, and chose out then a thousand of the most skillful workmen, and bought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, and others of carpenters, and then began to build; but this not till everything was well prepared for the work.[4]

Josephus reinforced his dating information found in *Antiquities of the Jews* by making a comment dating the construction of the Temple in *Wars of the Jews* 1, 21, 1. In this volume, Josephus says, “Accordingly, in the fifteenth year of his reign [over Jerusalem and Judea], Herod rebuilt [began the process to rebuild] the temple, and encompassed a piece of land about it with a wall.”[5]

This remark in *Wars of the Jews* does not conflict with Josephus' other work, rather this book was written from the perspective of Jewish military history. It was reasonable in such a volume to date from the conquest that completed the restoration of Israel to Roman rule under their "king," Herod. As with the statement in *Antiquities of the Jews*, the dating refers to the start of the preparation tasks of rebuilding the Temple; it does not mark the start of the construction itself. Herod's 15th regnal year based upon the military conquest of Jerusalem and Judea was again between October 3, 24 B.C. and September 20, 23 B.C.

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The Beginning of Temple Construction

Josephus provides all the information necessary to pin down when the first part of the Temple, the inner Temple section, was completed. His work further explains that the inner Temple took eighteen months to complete. Using this information, the beginning of the 46-year period of construction can be ascertained. The entirety of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* book 15, chapter 11, 6 is devoted to the celebration of the completion of the **inner building** of the Temple so sacrifices could again be offered in the Temple. It states:

> But the [inner] temple itself was built by the priests in a year and six months - upon which all the people were full of joy; and presently they returned thanks, in the first place, to God; and in the next place for the alacrity the king had shown. They feasted and celebrated this rebuilding of the temple; and for the king, he sacrificed three hundred oxen to God; as did the rest, everyone according to his ability; the number of which sacrifices is not possible to set down; for it cannot be that we should truly

> relate it; for at the same time with this celebration for the work about the temple, fell also the day of the king's inauguration, which he kept of an old custom as a festival, and it now coincided with the other; which coincidence of them both made the festival most illustrious.[6]

"In 18 months" per Jewish understanding can represent 17 months were past and that the celebration occurred during the 18th month from the start of construction. Josephus describes during the 18th month after construction began the Jews had a celebration of the inner Temple's completion which coincided with Herod's inauguration as king - which occurred between September 19 and 26 each year. In 20 B.C. these dates coincide with the completion of the eighteenth month of work on the inner Temple.

Whether by Divine providence or the cunning of Herod the Great, the timing of the construction project was so that it would incur the most favor with the people at it's completion. The dating of the celebration of the completion of the inner Temple which coincided with the week of commemoration of Herod's inauguration lined up with crucial Jewish Religious days. September 19 was 1 *Tishrei*, the Feast of Trumpets – political New Years Day. September 26th was just before the 10th of *Tishrei*, the Day of Atonement. All of Israel fit to travel would soon ascend to Jerusalem and see their new Temple and rejoice shortly afterward with the Feast of Tabernacles 15 *Tishrei* – 21 *Tishrei*.

The 18-month construction could not begin until after the old temple was removed. This destruction, the first step of the project of construction, began also with judicious timing. It appears logical enough to assume that no stone was removed until just after the completion of the spring great feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was completed at dust of April 25th, 21 *Nisan* of 21 B.C.
after

The "construction" therefore began with the "destruction" of the prior Temple, which began after the Feast of Unleavened Bread was completed 21 *Nisan*, dusk of April 25th eighteen months earlier in 21 B.C.

Again, for clarity:

> Herod gave a speech which initiated the period of gathering of materials, very likely at a major Feast during his 18th year from his inauguration as king, his 15th year of rule over Jerusalem, between October 3, 24 B.C. and September 20, 23 B.C.
>
> Removal of the old Temple began after April 25, 21 B.C. **This date marks the beginning of the construction work on the New Temple.**
>
> The Inner Temple was completed in time for the New Years Day 1 *Tishrei* and the religious celebrations to follow in that month in 20 B.C.

The timing of the completion of the inner Temple is vital to this chronology. However, note that the remaining parts of the structure and the grounds were not yet finished. The rest of the Temple was still being constructed when the religious leaders had their conversation with Christ nearly a half-century later.

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The Year of Christ's Conversation with the Religious Leaders

The first step in defining the 46-year period of construction was identifying the point to mark its inception, as just analyzed. The second step is to identify the end point of the 46-year period, which was in the spring of 26 A.D.

God's law and Jewish tradition dictated that they cleansed their homes of leaven, representing sin, on the Day of Preparation, 14 *Nisan*. The morning part of this date, April 19, 26 A.D. was almost certainly when Jesus cleansed the Temple, the home of His Father and Himself. Therefore, the conversation between the religious leaders and Jesus was logically 14 Nisan, April 19 of A.D 26. It is also logical to assume that **the year's work, the 46th year of construction, was completed the prior day,** since work on the Day of Preparation and during the feast, which ended 21 *Nisan*, would have interfered with religious activities. The 47th year of construction started after the feast and the weekly Sabbath the next day. This new year of work began 23 *Nisan* which was April 28, 26 A.D.

This encounter documenting the year Christ began His ministry is recorded by the Apostle John. It was also John who provided the precise information and details of Christ's first two weeks of ministry leading up to the cleansing of the temple and the confrontation with the religious leaders. The confluence of the year and the days John documents makes a huge discovery possible: the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy recorded in Daniel 9 discussed in the next chapter. Apostle John was obviously very intentional in providing this chronological information. It is safe to assume he did so understanding that Christ wanted His Church to know the precision of God's divine timing and its relevance to His Church.

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Chapter 13 Summary

As Jesus' public ministry began, He redirected the Jews' angry confrontation of Him as He cleaned out His house. He turned their anger into an opportunity. His words and the religious leaders' assumable response documented the time He would spend in the grave, the timing of His Resurrection, as well as the exact date His public ministry began. The following chart reviews this chapter.

Year based upon Hebrew or Macedonian Calendar system	Regnal Year as King	over Jerusalem
Sept. week of 19th - 26th 40 B.C. (First regnal year as king ends Sept. 29th)	1	
Herod's first regnal year of reign		
(Full political year was 1 *Tishrei* – 29 *Elul*) Oct. 7, 38 B.C. – Sept. 25, 37 B.C.	4	
July 37 B.C. – Sept. 25, 37 B.C.		1
First regnal year ruling all Israel began when he conquered Jerusalem and all Judah July 37 B.C. Both his fourth regnal year of reign and first regnal year as ruler of all Israel ended Sept. 25, 37 B.C.		
Oct. 3, 24 B.C. – Sept. 20, 23 B.C.	18	15
Herod gave his speech announcing his plans for the Temple during his 18th year as king, his 15th year as ruler over all of Israel		
Sept. 10, 22 B.C. – Sept. 28, 21 B.C.	20	17
Preparations were completed in time for the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread 21 B.C. Once the feast concluded, 21 Nisan, work began sunrise April 26, 21 B.C.		
Sept. 29, 21 B.C. – Sept. 18, 20 B.C.	21	18
The Inner Temple was completed during the 18th month after the start of construction, near the end of Herod's 21st year as king. The Feast of Trumpets, 1 Tishrei, starting the political new year, was September 19 and coincided in 20 B.C. with the anniversary of the week of Herod's inauguration Sept 19 - 26.		

46-years of construction were completed
13 Nisan, April 18, A.D. 26

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Chapter 14
A Date Stamp Posted in the Old Testament (Daniel 9:20-27)

God's Message Informing Daniel When the Ministry of Christ Would Begin

Identifying the Date of the Decree Which Began the Countdown to Messiah

Esther's Secret and Her Husband's Right to Know

The Date and Event which Fulfilled the 483-Year Countdown

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God's Message Informing Daniel When the Ministry of Christ Would Begin

The book of Daniel contains a prophecy relayed by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. This prophecy of "the 70 weeks" has mesmerized many a biblical scholar and student. In the prophecy, each week represents a "week of years" marking the timing of divinely appointed events. Here is the pertinent section of the prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:25-27:

> *So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.*
>
> *Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its* [his] *end will come with a*

flood, even to the end there will be war;
desolations are determined.

And he will make a firm covenant with the many
for one week, but in the middle of the week he
will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and
on the wing of abominations will come one who
makes desolate, even until a complete
destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on
the one who makes desolate.

The first question to be addressed is, "What constituted the decree?" Persian King Cyrus, who reigned 559-530 B.C., made an edict allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple in 538/537 B.C. (II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1 and 6:3).[1] Because of Cyrus' decree, the Jews were permitted to return to Israel at any point. While some took advantage of the opportunity immediately, many lingered in the land of their captivity. Cyrus' decree, however, did not call for the rebuilding of the entire city inclusive of walls, as mentioned in the prophecy. King Darius the Great, who reigned from 522 – 486 B.C., reinforced Cyrus' decree, encouraging the work of the Temple's construction. (Darius the Great was not Darius the Mede mentioned in the book of Daniel.) Darius the Great's decree occurred on September 21, 520 B.C. (Haggai 1:15).[2] Like Cyrus' decree, Darius the Great's decree did not mention the restoration of Jerusalem or the reconstituting of its walls.

The King who made the decree allowing for the rebuilding of Jerusalem is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. The Greek form of his name, Artaxerxes, is used in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as well as in the works of Josephus.[3] Artaxerxes I's decree on New Year's Day, 1 *Nisan*, of 458 B.C. is recorded in Ezra 7:11-26.

This decree allowed the Jews to return with his blessing, provided gold and silver, utensils for use in the Temple, and financial support from the provinces of the empire

west of the Euphrates River. Artaxerxes I's words recorded in Ezra 7:14 say Ezra is to "inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand." The word translated "inquire" is SHW #1240, לְבַקָּרָא, pronounced "lə-ḇaq-qā-rā." This word includes both the meaning "to investigate" and "to care for." To "care for" Jerusalem implies permission for the reconstruction of the walls necessary to protect it.

In addition, Artaxerxes I appointed Ezra as ruler of the people west of the Euphrates River. He had authority to teach the people the law of God and any who disobeyed God's law or the king Ezra was given authority to execute or banish and confiscate their belongings (Ezra 7:25-26). Although beyond the scope of this work such an order including the authority to rebuild the citadel of military power, which Jerusalem once was, speaks of Artaxerxes I's wisdom to make the people of his wife a military ally. Such would be in accord with the common custom of the day of alliances being sealed through marriage. The prophecy delivered by Gabriel refers to this decree.

The prophecy is separated into three sections. Seven weeks of years were to transpire marking the 49-year period during which the city and the wall would be restored. Then, 62 weeks of years (434 years) would be added to the 49 years equaling 483 years from the decree allowing the Jews to rebuild the city and wall "until Messiah." As the prophecy stated, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed "after Messiah" (in A.D. 70). Finally, the last week of years mentioned in the prophecy pertains to the seven-year tribulation period. Neither the 49-year period of reconstruction, nor the annihilation of A.D. 70, nor the seven-year tribulation period at the end of the age are the focus of this book. However, the arrival of Messiah is central to this study.

Some have suggested a subsequent directive by Artaxerxes I that sent Nehemiah to Israel in 445 B.C. with permission and funding to finish the task of rebuilding the wall was

the decree to which Gabriel's message referred (Nehemiah 2:1-8). This second action of Artaxerxes I only reinforces the belief he intended the walls to be constructed when he sent Ezra in 458 B.C. Note as the king sent Nehemiah, he was not dismayed that Ezra and the Jews had started the process of rebuilding the city and walls, the king joined Nehemiah in his concern the wall rebuild was not complete.

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Identifying the Date of the Decree Which Began the Countdown to Messiah

To determine when Artaxerxes I's decree occurred, it is necessary to determine when his reign officially began. Artaxerxes I began to rule shortly after the assassination of his father, Xerxes I, at the hand of Artabanus in August 465 B.C.[4] Some say Artabanus ruled as regent for a few months before he was killed and was replaced by Artaxerxes I. Although the specific date Artaxerxes I began to rule may be in doubt, defining when his reign began officially in the Biblical records is certain.

In the book of Ezra, his reign is officially marked from the next New Year's Day as Ezra uses the accession-year dating system customary in Jewish records of the time.[5] For more on accession-year dating please refer to the appendix entitled, "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**." The new year was marked from 1 *Nisan* in Israel and within the book of Ezra.[6] As Esther 3:7 notes, the Persians marked their New Years' Day as 1 *Nisan* as well, although the Persian name for the month in their calendars was "Ādukanaiša."[7] Therefore, Artaxerxes I's reign began officially per Ezra in the spring on 1 *Nisan* of 464 B.C.[8]

Although Ezra used accession-year regnal dating, the book of Esther as well as Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, that provide pertinent information, use a different

system. Both the writings of Josephus[9] and the book of Esther use nonaccession-year regnal dating. Use of both these systems can be seen by comparing the dating information and methods in Ezra 7:7-9, Esther 2:16-18, and Josephus' record. The following chart provides the dating of Artaxerxes I's reign using both methods:

Dating of Artaxerxes I's reign	**Nonaccession -dating Used by Esther and Josephus**	**Accession -dating Used by Ezra**
August 465 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 464 B.C.	year 1	Accession year
1 *Nisan*, 464 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 463. B.C.	year 2	year 1
1 *Nisan*, 463 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 462 B.C.	year 3	year 2
1 *Nisan*, 462 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 461 B.C.	year 4	year 3
1 *Nisan*, 461 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 460 B.C.	year 5	year 4
1 *Nisan*, 460 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 459 B.C.	year 6	year 5
1 *Nisan*, 459 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 458 B.C.	year 7 *	year 6
1 *Nisan*, 458 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 457 B.C.	year 8	year 7 **
1 *Nisan*, 425 B.C. until 1 *Nisan*, 424 B.C.	year 41	year 40
1 *Nisan*, - 424 B.C. Dec 25, 424 B.C.	partial year not counted	year 41

* The last month of this year was dedicated by the king to celebrating Esther and their royal marriage, according to Josephus.

** The first day of this year is when the Jews began their trip back to Jerusalem according to Ezra.

Esther's Secret and Her Husband's Right to Know

Ezra 7:9 records the Jews left to return to Israel on the first day of the first month of Artaxerxes I's seventh year of reign (his eighth year per Esther and Josephus). This date would have been 1 *Nisan* of 458 B.C.[10] The book of Esther tells of Artaxerxes I's marriage to Esther and his love for her. Josephus also describes their relationship and marriage. Here is how Josephus describes Artaxerxes I's celebration of Esther as his queen:

> And when Esther had come to him, he was pleased with her, and fell in love with the damsel, and married her, and made her his lawful wife, and kept a wedding feast for her on the 12th month of the seventh year of his reign which was called *Adao*.[11] [Hebrew spelling - *Adar*; Babylonian spelling – *Addāru*].[12]

The issue at hand is the dating of the decree of Artaxerxes I to release the Jews to return to Israel and rebuild Jerusalem. When one considers the words of Josephus in conjunction with Ezra 7:7-9, something jumps into focus. Here is Ezra 7:7-9 reflecting the timing in accession-year regnal dating:

> *And some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, and singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.*

And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon' and the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him.

The Jews departed for Jerusalem the next day after the month-long celebration for Esther ended. That day was the first day of the new year.

A question remains: "Was the timing of the celebration and the Jew's departure coincidence or coordination?" Ezra 7:6 records King Artaxerxes I "granted him (Ezra) all he requested because the hand of the Lord was upon him." The king allowed Ezra to lead the Jews home to Israel and gave him great power and control of great wealth in 458 B.C. Would a king normally give such things to a man who is believed to have been in his early 20's and not of his blood? It is unclear how Ezra received such favor. Certainly, there were forces at work within the home and heart of King Artaxerxes I through which the hand of God directed him. Queen Esther was such a force.

God could have put love for the Jews and trust of the Jews in the heart of the king without any direct cause. It is also theoretically possible Queen Esther conducted a wonderfully successful campaign to manipulate the king's attitude toward the Jews. However, such manipulation is unlikely since she could not be in the king's presence or speak with him except at his request. Logic and some implications in Scripture suggest a possibility. Perhaps, Artaxerxes I's favor toward the Jews was because he knew Queen Esther was one. If so, this theory explains the date of the proclamation. Here are the two logical options.

Option 1 – King Artaxerxes I knew Esther was a Jew, but he told no one. The timing of the party and the departure was intentional.

Esther had been raised by her cousin Mordecai, who served as a father figure to her and told her to tell no one she was a Jew. Josephus says Esther did not reveal her national origin to King Artaxerxes I.[13] Josephus' assertion means either she did not tell the king her nationality or the king kept her secret. Scripture says she kept her nationality a secret as Mordecai had told her (Esther 2:20). Yet Scripture also says, the two shall become one flesh. Esther 2:20 does not exclude the possibility Esther told her husband in private. Telling her husband does not mean Esther disobeyed Mordecai. Submission to a cousin, even one who had become an adoptive father, is not as important as submission to a husband. A decision to obey a cousin over a husband is not in conformity with Scripture. A Jewish woman knew she was to submit to her husband.

It is not logical to believe a king would have failed to ask his wife about her nationality. Kings care about politics. The nationality of the queen has political ramifications. If he knew her Jewish nationality, it would probably be in the king's interests to keep it confidential.

Perhaps the proclamation releasing the Jews and its timing was decided by King Artaxerxes I in discussion with his Jewish wife, Esther. Further, the party would have allowed Esther to make a memory while she said good-bye to kin she loved and would never see again. This timing would be a loving gesture for a husband to his bride. It would also fit custom throughout the region as royal marriages were used to create, or reflect already existing, alliances between nations.

Having the Jewish people as allies and their capital Jerusalem as a fortification would certainly not hurt a Persian King whose father was recently defeated by the Greeks in a major battle. The Persian Empire was vulnerable to the northwest. A rebuilt and fortified

Jerusalem, being west of Persia, would have provided a military asset if occupied by Jewish allies. To some degree this alliance and affinity existed between Iran (formerly Persia) and Israel until 1979. This idea may be foreign to many who are unaware, but the Persian people and the Jews had a high level of cooperation until the Shaw of Iran was deposed by the Ayatollahs on January 16, 1979.

One might ask why King Artaxerxes I would, just five years later, in 453 B.C. permit Haman to have all the Jews in the kingdom killed? The answer is revealed in Scripture. Esther 3:8-12 says when Haman obtained the permission to kill the Jews, he never revealed to the king who his victims would be. His words were, "It is not in the king's interest to let them remain."

Option 1 means Esther told the king she was a Jew, the timing of the party was intentional, and the king did not tell even his most trusted official, Haman, the queen was a Jew. All of these suggestions make perfect sense.

Option 2 – Esther never told her husband her nationality.

If this were the case, then Artaxerxes I freed the Jews for other reasons. The Bible notes that, in addition to Ezra, another Jew, Nehemiah, was the king's trusted cupbearer. Of course, God could have moved the heart of King Artaxerxes I through these men, or without any reason at all. Option 2 is possible, but not logical.

It is realistic and more likely God led the king to orchestrate circumstances related to Esther to liberate the Jews as reflected in option 1. It does not violate Scripture, if one accepts Esther's obedience in keeping her secret did not include keeping it from her husband.

This belief is consistent with God again using Esther to lead the heart of the king later to save them from Haman's slaughter. Because of the timing of the party and the privacy couples can keep, the schedule seems to have the fingerprints of a loving husband. It seems the party and the Jews' release at its end were a wonderful present given to Esther by her husband the king, directed by the Great King of the Universe. What a wonderful gift of love, a secret perhaps only the two of them would know and understand at the time!

Regarding the timing, consider that the decree would have been a major event to not only the Jews, but also the whole empire. King Artaxerxes I would have wanted an appropriate day for such an event. New Year's Day would no doubt have been such a day for celebration. It would have been perfect for the event. It is inconceivable the Jews would have been left in the dark regarding the decree allowing them to return to their homeland. They must have been notified and given time to assemble in the capital city to celebrate Esther's marriage for a month and then to begin their trip on New Years' Day.

Further, the day of the signing of the edict would have been marked by rejoicing as the Jews began their journey home immediately. Had the Jews not celebrated the decision and acted upon it immediately, their sloth might have been perceived as an insult to the king and his kindness. Logically, the date the trip began was the date the decree was made. The fact the date the Jews left "the first day of the first month" is given prominence in Ezra 7:7-9 corroborates this judgment.

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The Date and Event which Fulfilled the 483-Year Countdown

Based upon the prophecy in Daniel, 1 *Nisan*, 458 B.C. began the 483-year countdown to Messiah. Moving forward 483 years brings one to 1 *Nisan* A.D. 26. The prophecy was perfectly fulfilled 1 *Nisan*, a full 483 years later by the Hebrew lunar calendar and also by the solar calendar as it was likely the same date, April 5/6, in both 458 B.C. and A.D. 26. As one analyzes the timing of the start of Christ's ministry in A.D. 26, 1 *Nisan* is quite significant.

The following is the chronology of the major days and the events occurring on them from Jesus' baptism until the cleansing of the Temple on 14 *Nisan*. The information is provided in John's Gospel. Date calculations in this section are based upon 1 *Nisan* dating through moon visibility available through Parker and Dubberstein and the United States Naval Observatory.

Daylight part of 19 *Adar* Tuesday, February 26 of A.D. 26 - Christ was baptized!

19 *Adar* – 29 *Adar II*- Christ spent 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-2). Then on Sunday, 29 *Adar II*, the last day of the year, He returned to where John was baptizing, Aenon near Salim (John 3:23). Being year 6 of the 19-year Hebrew calendar cycle, A.D. 26 had an intercalation month, this thirteenth month is called *Adar II*. The Jewish lunar calendar inserts intercalation months to adjust to the solar year. These are explained in the appendix "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars.** A.D. 26 having a 13th month is supported by cgsf.org.

As 1 *Nisan* began at dusk April 7th A.D. 26, after Jesus completed His 40-day fast and returned from the wilderness, John the Baptist saw Christ and

announced: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). **Still 1 *Nisan*** – Monday morning, April 8th, the next day by the Roman timing used in John the Beloved's Gospel, John the Baptist again saw Christ and declared a second time, "the Lamb of God." John the Beloved Disciple and Andrew immediately left the Baptizer and began following Jesus, spending the rest of that day with Him, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. (John 1:35-36). To understand the timing of the Gospel of John please see the appendix, "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**."

This was the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry, during the day part of New Year's Day per the religious calendar. This day marks the 483rd 1 *Nisan* since the decree of Artaxerxes I on 1 *Nisan* 458 B.C. - thus fulfilling the Daniel 9 prophecy "until Messiah."

2 *Nisan* – After staying with Christ until around 6 p.m. as 2 *Nisan* began, Andrew went to get his brother Peter and brought him to Jesus (John 1:42-43). The group may have begun their journey from Aenon to Cana the evening of 2 *Nisan*, April 8th.

2-3 *Nisan* – Left for or continued the walk to Cana on the morning of Tuesday, April 9th, still 2 *Nisan*, arriving in Cana the Wednesday before the evening wedding of 4 *Nisan*. This walk was 35-40 miles. He gathered Philip and Nathaniel as disciples along the way. This timing is shown in John 2:1 which says He arrived the third day per Roman timing (Monday – Wednesday). This distance is reasonable, considering that American western pioneers went 20 miles a day on their treks.[14]

4 *Nisan* – Christ arrived at Cana before Wednesday evening began 4 *Nisan*, in time for the wedding on the night customary for virgins.[15] While He was in Cana of Galilee for the wedding, Jesus performed His first recorded miracle, although privately. Jesus spent Wednesday night and at least part of Thursday in Cana.

4-5 Nisan – Leaving Thursday afternoon would have allowed the 16.5-mile walk to Capernaum to be divided between two days. The group which included Jesus, His family, and disciples had to arrive in Capernaum before the Sabbath began Friday evening, 6 *Nisan* (John 2:1-11).

6 *Nisan* through the night of 8 *Nisan* – Christ stayed in Capernaum at least the Sabbath and also probably all of 7 *Nisan*, His 30th birthday, with His mother, brothers, and His first disciples. Most likely He began His trip to Jerusalem on Monday morning, 8 *Nisan*, after spending His birthday with His mother and family (John 2:12). Therefore, when He began His public ministry Sunday morning, 14 *Nisan*, He was old enough to be a public leader, per Jewish custom.

Morning of 8 *Nisan* through 12 *Nisan* - Christ made the 85-mile trip from Capernaum to Jerusalem before the Sabbath began Friday evening. He traveled approximately 17 miles each day.

13 *Nisan* (weekly Sabbath day) - Christ arrived in the area of Jerusalem before Friday evening, 13 *Nisan*, began the Sabbath, on April 19th.[16]

14 *Nisan* – Sunday morning, Christ cleanses the Temple as "the feast was drawing near" – before noon on the Day of Preparation as per custom and law (John 2:14-17).

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Chapter 14 Summary

God's message to Daniel concerning the arrival of Messiah, recorded in Daniel 9 prophesied 483 years from "the decree" until Messiah. The period began with the decree of Artaxerxes I on 1 *Nisan*, April 5/6, 458 B.C.

The fulfilment of the prophecy occurred after John the Baptist declared Jesus to be "The Lamb of God," which he did twice on that Hebrew date. The first of two such declarations by John the Baptist occurred in the evening after Christ returned from His forty-day fast, the evening of 1 *Nisan*, April 5, A.D. 26. The next morning, still 1 *Nisan*, but April 6 on the solar Roman calendar, John the Baptist declared it again. That morning, the first of Christ's disciples began to follow Him, beginning Jesus' private discipling ministry as Messiah.

Jesus turned 30 on 7 *Nisan*, April 13th, by both lunar and solar calendars. Six days later He began His public ministry by cleansing the Temple.

Chapter 15
The Passover Season and the Last Supper

Origin and Meanings of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Last Supper as a Celebration of Passover for Christ and His Disciples

The Last Supper Included All the Normal Parts of a Passover Meal

Where Jesus Obtained and Kept the Lamb for Passover in Obedience to the Law

The Seven-Day Feast of Unleavened Bread, with an Extra Day for Preparations

The Gospels All Agree on the Date of the Last Supper, 14 *Nisan*, the Evening that began the Day of Preparation

Preparations for the Last Supper that Fulfilled the Old Testament Requirements for a Passover

The Timing and Place of the Disciples Preparations of the Lamb for the Meal

The Date of the Last Supper Was Perfect

Historical Documentation of the Date and Day of the Last Supper

How the 14 *Nisan* Passover Meal Became Regarded as 15 *Nisan*

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Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" (Matthew 26:17)

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" (Mark 14:12)

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread of which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." (Luke 22:7-8) (underlining added)

(The underlined words do not appear in the Greek text but are added to the text by the translators. The capitalization within the sentences of all four verses is also a translation assumption. A word-by-word translation of the Greek for the verses above will be provided so the additional words and the assumptions made by most English translators can be easily seen.)

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Origin and Meanings of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The first Passover was more than a meal; it was a deliverance. Passover was instituted by God both to save the Israelites and as a testament of His eternal plan. The children of Israel were without hope. They were in bondage. They were tormented and murdered by their oppressors. Nevertheless, God was not blind to their condition. He loved them and delivered them.

God is both just and loving. His plan showed both attributes. After giving Pharoah ample opportunity to repent, God killed the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:12 and 12:29). This judgment was just, as the Egyptians had

been murdering the Israelite babies in the Nile. God's action was also loving. He provided a means to escape death. As God killed the firstborn children in Egypt, He passed over the homes marked with the blood of the Passover lamb. Thus, God had provided a means of escape for those who obeyed His plan.

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The Last Supper as a Celebration of Passover for Christ and His Disciples

Scholars have chosen several positions regarding whether the Last Supper of Christ was a Passover meal. One proposal is that the meal was not a Passover meal. This view teaches the Last Supper was Christ's commemoration and replacement of the annual Passover meal with a custom to be practiced regularly.[1] This new custom the church calls the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Another view is the Last Supper was an early Passover. Those who regard it as such suggest it could be considered a preparatory, practice, or "quasi-Passover meal."[2] Such a meal would not have been a violation of any law.

Yet Jesus' words declare, He regarded the Last Supper as a Passover meal for Him and His disciples. This understanding is clear in Jesus' statement recorded in Luke 22:15-16:

> *And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

In the first century A.D., there were differing opinions regarding when the Passover meal should take place. During the Last Supper itself, it appears the disciples were

having some trouble understanding what was happening. They were confused. Scripture says when Judas left the room some of the disciples wondered if he had been instructed to make purchases for the "feast." The disciples thought the purchases could either be benevolent gifts for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to begin the next day, or the wording allows that the purchases were to be specific items for the 15 *Nisan* Passover meal they may still have anticipated the next evening (John 13:27-29). Nevertheless, Christ had told them this Last Supper was their Passover meal.

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The Last Supper Included All the Normal Parts of a Passover Meal

Although the Last Supper was a Passover meal, many question if it included a lamb. While it is true some in the Essene community did not include a lamb in the Passover meal,[3] a lamb was almost always a part of this meal. The Scriptural mandate, and the common custom of the Jews, is to have a lamb as the central part of the Passover meal. The suggestion there was no lamb for the Last Supper also seems outlandish since all the other parts of the meal were on the table. Scripture records the presence of the bread, the wine, and a bowl, that almost certainly contained the bitter herbs.[4]

Some English translations of Luke 22:7-8 add words to the Greek thus altering the meaning contained in the Greek text. The King James Version (KJV) handles these verses beautifully because it does not add extra words. Here is the KJV translation of Luke 22:7-8:

> *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the passover for us, so that we may eat it."*

Most translations of these verses add the word lamb in verse seven. The correct inference of the Greek text is that a Passover lamb was to be slaughtered. It seems clear, if a translation assumes the word lamb belongs in verse seven, then it should be translated the same way in verse eight. It would be consistent to either insert or omit the word in both verses. Verse seven clearly infers the word lamb, verse eight infers the lamb along with, most likely, the rest of the meal. There is no reason to assume there would not be a lamb served in the meal based upon this text.

The error of inconsistency, adding the word lamb in verse seven and leaving it out of verse eight, implies to the reader there may not have been a lamb in the meal. This assumption is especially easy to make since a lamb is not mentioned later in Luke 22. Yet, to be clear, the presence of the rest of the normal Passover meal and the Greek wording of Luke 22:7-8 both indicate Christ and His disciples ate a lamb during the Last Supper.

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Where Jesus Obtained and Kept the Lamb for Passover in Obedience to the Law

It was not common that Christ's specific location was noted for each day of His ministry. However, there is an interesting inclusion leading up to Passion Week. Through deduction it can be determined Christ raised Lazarus from the grave on, or shortly before, 8 *Nisan* (see "**Passion Week Summary**" at the end of chapter 17). Scripture then says He left the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary in Bethany and went to Ephraim to spend at least one night, only to return soon to Bethany (John 11:54).

It is logical to ask why Christ made the 10-mile round trip from Bethany to Ephraim. The answer may be implied by a verse in the Old Testament. The town of Ephraim is mentioned in II Samuel 13:23 as being near the spot King

David's son Absalom had his sheep sheared. Ephraim was apparently a center for sheep herding. This town was also very close to the border between Judah and Samaria. It appears Christ was obtaining a lamb from this sheep-town on the edge of Samaria for use in the Passover meal. Based on this analysis, Jesus obtained His lamb at least four days before its slaughter per the requirements of the law.

Jesus and His disciples then returned to Bethany by 9 *Nisan* and had the evening weekly Sabbath meal with Lazarus and his sisters. These three close friends, as well as Simon the (healed) leper, resided in Bethany. Jesus apparently left the lamb for the Passover/Last Supper in the care of such a friend. It seems Simon is the most likely. If so, collecting the lamb provides one reason why Jesus had lunch at this man's home on 13 *Nisan*. Perhaps the anticipation of Jesus' visit was the reason a woman was there and prepared to anoint Him with oil.

Whoever cared for the lamb, it would have been in a home near where Jesus spent each night during the four-day period required to observe the Passover lamb before its sacrifice (Exodus 12:1-6).[5] Scripture specifically says Jesus and His disciples spent the days in the temple and slept near Bethany on the Mount of Olives. They were close enough for Jesus or one of His disciples to check in on the lamb to verify it was still perfect as the law required. There Jesus "spent the night in the open" as reflected by SGW #835, "ηὐλίσθη," pronounced "ēulisthē," which means to "lodge in the open." This word is used in both Matthew 21:17 and Luke 21:37 describing where Jesus slept during Passion Week. Under these circumstances the lamb was certainly better kept in a nearby friend's home.

Some might ask why Christ would have preferred buying a lamb from a town on the border of Samaria instead of at the Temple as was done by many Jews. Remember, Jesus Christ had highlighted the offense of selling livestock in

the Temple (Matthew 21:13 and Luke 19:46). Further, the law did not require the purchase of the lamb from the priests. In addition, Christ made efforts to bridge the gap between Jews and Samaritans. The purchase of the lamb could have been another opportunity to make this point.

***

The Seven-Day Feast of Unleavened Bread, with an Extra Day for Preparations

Exodus 12:15-20 and Exodus 13:7 lay out the regulation that there was to be no leaven eaten, or even found within their homes or land, for a seven-day period. The Talmud and custom specified one could not eat leaven after 10 a.m. or 11 a.m. on 14 *Nisan* and any remaining leaven was to be burned at noon on 14 *Nisan*.[6] The Jews came to the understanding the cleaning of the house of all leaven required an extra day, as many even washed their walls. This cleaning had to be done **before**, not during, the seven days set aside for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 – 21 of *Nisan*. During the feast, only the preparation of food for consumption was permitted (Exodus 12:16). Therefore, a Day of Preparation became a necessary transitional day. These regulations and customs clarify why the Synoptic Gospel writers referred to the Day of Preparation as one of the days of unleavened bread, hence the eight-day unleavened period.

Further, most Jews aligned with the Pharisees and sacrificed their Passover lamb on the afternoon of the Day of Preparation. For them, the lamb was not killed during the seven-day feast itself. One can see how the Day of Preparation could become attached in the minds of the Jews to the Feast of Unleavened Bread itself. On one occasion, first century Jewish historian, Josephus, even refers to "a feast for eight days, which is called *the feast of unleavened bread.*"[7]

During recent history and even today, the Day of Preparation preceding the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread causes some to refer to the Feast as the eight days of Passover.[8] To be clear, the Day of Preparation is one 24-hour day beginning, per Pharisaic timing, at dusk. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commences the next day with most of the Jews receiving the Passover meal beginning after dusk on this first day of the seven-day feast.

Do not be confused by the term "Passion Week." Passion Week is not the same as the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Rather, it is a term used to describe the week that began with Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. During that seven-day period, Christ continued to show His immense love toward mankind by His willingness to go through the disrespect, the heartbreak, and the pain He suffered leading up to and including His death on the cross. Passion Week then culminates with His victorious Resurrection!

***

The Gospels All Agree on the Date of the Last Supper, 14 *Nisan*, the Evening that began the Day of Preparation

All four Gospels teach the same chronology regarding when the Last Supper occurred. Yet tragically, due to how the Gospels are usually translated into English, they seem to contradict each other. This confusion is the result of most English translations inserting words not found in the Greek texts of the Gospels and missing words which were implied.

A precise translation of the Greek texts proves the four Gospels do agree on the date of the Last Supper. Matthew 26:17 records:

> *Now on the first* [day] *of the unleavened* [bread], *the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him*, "Where do You desire* [that] *we should prepare for You to eat the Passover?"* (translation by this author, *"to Him" is present in the Eastern Greek texts)

Without the errantly inserted additional word "feast" or capitalization, the implication is the disciples asked for instruction regarding the arrangements for the meal at the beginning of 14 *Nisan*, the Day of Preparation, **before** the feast began. This wording means the "first" day is the beginning of the eight-day unleavened period.

Most translations add additional words confusing whether the "first" day was the first day of the eight-day "unleavened" period or the seven-day "Feast of Unleavened Bread." If "bread" is added and "unleavened bread" remains uncapitalized, the date of the action is still the "first day" of the eight-day period. However, capitalizing "Unleavened," especially along with a capitalized "Bread," suggests the day is part of the seven-day feast. In addition to capitalizing "Unleavened" and "Bread," many translations also add the word "Festival" or "Feast." Adding this word further reinforces the error of moving the point in time forward to the beginning of the feast, 15 *Nisan*. Doing so makes Matthew's Gospel appear to be in conflict with the accounts found in the other Gospels.

Here is a precise translation of the Greek text of Mark 14:12:

> *Now on the first day of the unleavened* [bread], *when the Passover* [lamb] *they used to sacrifice, His disciples say to Him, "Where, having gone, do You desire* [that] *we should prepare so that You may eat the Passover?"* (translation by this author)

Again, neither the word "bread" nor "feast" are present in the Greek. Mark's Gospel identifies the day as being the Day of Preparation, the beginning of the eight-day

unleavened period. This verse identifies the beginning of 14 *Nisan* as the time when the instructions were given and carried out.

Luke 22:7-8 presents the information in this fashion:

> *And now came the day of the unleavened, on which must be killed the Passover* [lamb]. *Therefore, He sent Peter and John, having said, "Having gone forth prepare for us the Passover that we might eat* [it]."

These verses present the same information as Matthew and Mark's Gospels. They do not say it was the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They say the first day of the eight-day unleavened period, had arrived. That first day of unleavened was the Day of Preparation, 14 *Nisan*.

Normal to his character, Luke provides precision. It was at the arrival time of the beginning of 14 Nisan that Christ sends the two disciples to make preparations for the meal. That point was at dusk the evening before the afternoon on which Passover lambs were sacrificed.

Jesus tells them what they will see when they have "gone forth" – a sign indicating whom to follow to the place to prepare for the meal. Jesus told Peter and John to follow a man who would meet them who was carrying a water jar (Luke 22:10). The normal custom was to get water at dusk. This information implies the conversation with the instructions happened near the point the man was in line to, or just filling, his pot at the well, and that the disciples carried out the instructions after dusk, the start of the new day.

Critics of the Bible incorrectly suggest Luke conflicts with Matthew and Mark's Gospels, missing the point that Luke's narrative presents the information from a different time perspective, using past participles (having said, having gone forth). Obviously, the disciples obeyed after

Christ had given the instructions. Luke's Gospel is saying the same thing as Matthew and Mark's Gospels. All three teach that the disciples performed their duties as the period of "unleavened" began, not during the seven-day feast. Fortunately, several English translations do not insert capitalization nor add words to the Greek and are therefore true to the original meaning.

It has also been suggested, the Greek word translated as "first" in Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 should be translated as "before." This translation choice means Jesus gave the instructions shortly before dusk began 14 *Nisan*, and thus on 13 *Nisan*.[9] This choice of wording, while rare, does no damage to the main chronological point: the day of the Last Supper was the Day of Preparation, 14 *Nisan*, per all four Gospels.

There is no contradiction in the timing of the Last Supper between the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel. John's Gospel supports the three Synoptic Gospels. John the Beloved removed any possible confusion with these very precise words:

> *And <u>before</u> the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that the hour had come for Him that He should move from this world to the Father...and Last Supper <u>having occurred</u> ...He rises from the supper.* (John 13:1-5) (underlining added)

John's Gospel was written last and directed to a Jewish audience. It is reasonable to believe John had access to the first three Gospels. Perhaps John's extremely clear wording regarding the dating of the Last Supper was to clarify misunderstandings in the minds of readers of the other three Gospels. For more information on John's Gospel, read the appendix: "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**."

There are other Scriptures that support the translation

and understanding of the verses from all four Gospels presented here. Mark 14:1-2 says the religious leaders were determined to have Christ killed **before the feast** which began at dusk, 15 *Nisan* by Pharisaic timing, lest there would be a riot. This fact is also reflected as the religious leaders refused to enter the abode of Pilate for the trial of Christ. They did not want to be defiled **because the Passover meal was to commence that evening** (John 18:28). The timing of the religious leaders' refusal to enter supports the position that Christ sent Peter and John to arrange for the Last Supper near the start of 14 *Nisan*. Thus, Christ's meal with His disciples was shared after dusk on that date, which was the Day of Preparation.

Consider the following reverse timeline concerning Jesus' instruction for the preparations for the Last Supper.

> Christ was in the grave before sunset began the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the start of 15 *Nisan*. On this date, the new day was marked by trumpet blasts once the third star of the evening was visible.[10]
>
> He passed at roughly 3 p.m. 14 *Nisan*.
>
> He was on the cross by 9 a.m. 14 *Nisan*.
>
> His trial ended around 6 a.m. 14 *Nisan*.
>
> He was abused throughout the night portion of 14 *Nisan* after His arrest at Gethsemane.
>
> He shared His Last Supper with His disciples after sunset, shortly after the beginning of 14 *Nisan*.
>
> He sent His disciples to make preparations for the Last Supper at dusk, the start of 14 *Nisan*.

***

Preparations for the Last Supper that Fulfilled the Old Testament Requirements for a Passover

Jesus had lunch at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany on Tuesday, 13 *Nisan*. In light of the requirements of God's instructions in the law, Scripture implies that after lunch, Jesus and His disciples retrieved the lamb for the Last Supper while they were in Bethany. Then they returned to Jerusalem with the lamb.

Taking the lamb with them from Bethany explains why the disciples asked where they would be preparing the meal for the evening. At that point, it was clear to them they would be eating the lamb a day before the majority of Jews.

Some may ask why the disciples did not slaughter the lamb between 3 and 5 p.m. as was done by most Jews.[11] The Scriptural instruction was to prepare the meal "at twilight."

> *Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it <u>at twilight</u>* (between the two evenings). Exodus 12:5-6

The word translated "at," is SHW #996, **בין**, pronounced "bên." The word translated "twilight" is SHW #6153, הָעַרְבָּיִם, pronounced "hā-'ar-bā-yim," that simply means "dusk."[12] When the two words are joined into a Hebrew phrase, **בין** הָעַרְבָּיִם, pronounced "bên, hā-'ar-bā-yim," and translated "at twilight", it means "**between the two evenings**." This phrase refers to the period between sunset and dark.[13] By the time of Christ's ministry, Jews had come to accept "at twilight," to begin at noon or 3 p.m. This understanding was due to the Pharisaic interpretation that the first of the

"two evenings" in this phrase, "dusk" or "sunset," means: after the apex of the sun at noon.

Onkelos documented the earlier and Scripturally correct Talmudic tradition into an Aramaic work called the Targum, circa A.D. 110.[14] According to Onkelos the term "between the two evenings" meant a period of 1 hour and 20 minutes starting at sunset.[15] The sacrifice of the lamb during this short period after sunset is recorded in Deuteronomy 16:6. After this verse says the sacrifice was at "twilight," SHW #6153, the meaning is then reinforced by a phrase comprised of two words. These words are: SHW #935, כְּבֹוא, pronounced "kə-ḇō-w," which means "at the going down," and SHW #8121, הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, pronounced "haš-še-meš," which means "of the sun."

The timing of the sacrifice after sunset and before dark was practiced by the Sadducees, Karaite Jews, and Samaritans.[16] This timeframe was also exactly when the disciples slaughtered and prepared the lamb for their Passover/Last Supper meal. Here are additional Old Testament Scriptures related to the sacrifice of the lamb and the Passover meal (underlining added).

> *These are the appointed times of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month* <u>*at twilight*</u> (between the two evenings) *is the Lord's Passover. Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread* (Leviticus 23:4-6).
>
> *Now let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month,* <u>*at twilight*</u> (between the two evenings)*, you shall observe it at its appointed time; you shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances* (Numbers 9:2-3).

> *But at the place where the LORD your God will choose to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover twilight* (evening)*, at the going down of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt* (Deuteronomy 16:6).

For clarity, the timing Jesus fulfilled matched the custom almost every Jew but the Pharisees had of slaughtering the lamb after dusk, [17] "between the two evenings." The Samaritans had the very specific custom of slaughtering the lamb at precisely 7:10 p.m. during the first century A.D. They maintain this custom even today. It is likely the slaughtering of the lamb at this time of day corresponds with what all of Israel did on the first Passover in Egypt.

It is important to understand the "when" of Jesus' timing. Jesus fulfilled all things perfectly regarding His Passover/Last Supper. The timing of the Last Supper matched the Scriptural instructions exactly.

It is also important to understand what seems to be the "why" of the moment of His death on the cross. Scripture says Jesus breathed His last on the Cross at around 3 p.m., at the time the Pharisees and many first century Jews sacrificed their Passover lambs for this evening meal. It appears it was God's plan for Jesus to die at that moment so His sacrifice as the Lamb of God for the people would not be missed.

Some might question if it was necessary for a priest to slaughter the Passover lambs. No, it was absolutely not a requirement for the priests to do so. Although, during the time of Christ, Passover lambs were generally sacrificed on the temple grounds.[18] When the Passover meal was established in Egypt every family killed their own lamb (Exodus 12:6).[19] During the early first century A.D. crowds of people in the Temple were an issue as historian Eugen Ruckstuhl records:

> … the great number of pilgrims [in Jesus' time] which made it impossible that all would observe their paschal meal in the Temple courtyards. And as Philo says, it was still the practice that families killed their own lambs: Every house bares at such time the holy character of a temple, when the sacrificial animal is slaughtered and prepared for the banquet. The guests, cleansed by purifying ablutions, congregate for the meal.[20]

It would have been theoretically possible for the lamb eaten at the Passover/Last Supper to have been slaughtered in the Temple on the afternoon of 13 *Nisan*, a day earlier than most Jews, as it was legal to slaughter lambs for offerings on the 13th "under another name."[21] One could have called a lamb a "peace offering" or a "thanksgiving offering," for example, had it been sacrificed in the Temple on that date. However, Scripture does not say Jesus directed His disciples to take their lamb to the Temple for slaughter.

Christ was operating in stealth. Had the disciples taken the lamb to the Temple, there is a high likelihood they would have been recognized and followed. Neither did Jesus want Judas to be able to inform the religious leaders where the meal was to be eaten. Perhaps the desire for uninterrupted privacy was the reason Jesus sent Peter and John ahead with a sign to know where to go and prepare, while not revealing the location to any of the disciples, including Peter and John.

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The Timing and Place of the Disciples Preparations of the Lamb for the Meal

Jesus sent two disciples, along with the lamb, to follow a man with a pitcher of water to a house with instructions

to “prepare the ‘passover’ (meaning the lamb)” along with the rest of the meal. As stated, retrieving water was at dusk. Women or servants would normally obtain the evening’s water at around 6 p.m.[22] This timing means the disciples were right on schedule to prepare the lamb for the evening’s Passover meal.

Once the disciples arrived at the home with the lamb and obtained permission to use the upper-room for the meal, they started preparations. Preparations of the lamb dinner began with the slaughter of the lamb, a common event within Jewish towns and cities. With some effort, two men could have the meal ready in around an hour and a half.

Some have suggested the Essenes could have provided a lamb or assistance in the slaughter of the lamb for the disciples since some did live within Jerusalem.[23] Although Scripture does not specify Essene assistance, it is very likely Jesus did have the help of at least one Essene household. The disciples followed a **man** carrying a water jar. Carrying of water jars was done by women - unless it was an Essene household.[24] Essenes were celibate males, meaning they did the work normally done by women.

There are additional indications the meal was in an Essene household. Scholars suggest the likely location of the house within Jerusalem, and the custom of washing feet, both point to an Essene household.[25] Additionally, since the Essenes rejected the timing of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Essenes would not have been offended by Christ and His followers having their Passover meal at a different time than when the major sects ate the meal. Neither a Pharisee nor a Sadducee would have allowed the great offense of a Passover meal on a date that was incorrect in their minds. Not even a guest would have been permitted to do so within their home.[26]

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The Date of the Last Supper Was Perfect

Just as there was disagreement regarding the beginning point for a new **date**, as mentioned in chapter one, there was disagreement concerning the **day** Passover was to be celebrated. The Samaritan timing was governed by what has been referred to as the "pre-exilic Jewish calendar."[27] Other groups also used the pre-exilic Jewish calendar for their Passover schedule. This calendar was used by at least some of the Essenes,[28] as well as the Zealots that existed during Christ's ministry (per Luke 6:15 and Josephus).[29] It is at least possible some Galileans also celebrated Passover based upon the pre-exilic Jewish calendar.[30] Because of their adherence to this calendar, these groups celebrated the Passover as the evening meal normally one day, and occasionally two or more days earlier than the Pharisees and Sadducees.[31] Nevertheless, the majority of Jews used, and continue to use, what can be described as the "post-exilic Jewish calendar."

The Samaritans are the descendants of gentile peoples relocated to Northern Israel who intermarried with the remaining Jews after the majority of the Jews were deported by the Assyrian Empire in 721 B.C. The Samaritans still exist today. They claim their Passover custom and timing date back to when they received training by a Levitical priest after the rest of the priests from the Northern Israelite Kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians (II Kings 17:27-28).

According to Samaritan tradition recorded in the *Taulida*, their written history, their calendar was established by Moses and then came to them through the High Priest Pinhas (Phinehas), a descendant of Aaron (Exodus 6:25).[32] The Samaritans, continue to use the pre-exilic Jewish calendar instituted by Moses based upon the Egyptian calendar. They slaughter the Passover lambs at precisely 7:10 p.m. and eat the meal close to midnight, as they assert was also taught to them.[33]

The Jews expelled from the Northern Kingdom generally lost their identity and disappeared after they were exiled. Within 150 years after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the Jews of the Southern Kingdom were deported by the Babylonians. Some of these Jews returned to Israel.

These returning Jews used the post-exilic Jewish calendar influenced by the Babylonian customs due to their many years held there in captivity. Sir Colin J. Humphreys explains the high probability of this calendar alteration. His work instructed this text. The serious student should study chapters 8-10 of his book, *The Mystery of the Last Supper* published by Cambridge University Press in 2011. Some detail of this information is provided in the appendix entitled "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**."

The sacrifice of the lamb for the Last Supper matched the time of the day for the sacrifice as practiced by both the Sadducees and the Samaritans in accordance with the original time instructions. The timing of the Last Supper itself was in accordance with the Levitical instructions given to Moses using the original calendar date of the Passover meal, since in A.D. 28, the correct year of the Crucifixion, the pre-exilic calendar was one day earlier than the post-exilic Jewish calendar. This text will prove Jesus Christ was crucified in A.D. 28. (Unless noted otherwise, Jewish dates in this book are per the currently used post-exilic Jewish Calendar.)

The Gospel narratives indicate the disciples understood that they would be celebrating the Last Supper before most received their Passover meal. Further, Mark 14:12 contains proof they understood why it would be that night, through the use of the "imperfect indicative active" form of the verb "sacrifice" in this verse. This Greek verb form points to a repeated action done during the past. Mark recorded, not just that the lamb was to be sacrificed that evening, but moreover, the lamb "used to be" sacrificed this day, based upon the pre-exilic Hebrew calendar.

***

Historical Documentation of the Date and Day of the Last Supper

Ancient records state the Last Supper was conducted on the evening that began 14 *Nisan*, not the next evening that began the Feast of Unleavened Bread on 15 *Nisan*. Claudius Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis and apologist, states circa A.D. 160 -180:

> The fourteenth day, the true Passover of the Lord; the great sacrifice, the Son of God instead of the lamb, who was bound, who bound the strong, and who was judged, [though] Judge of living and dead, and who was delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified, who was lifted up on the horns of the unicorn,* and who was pierced in His holy side, who poured forth from His side the two purifying elements, water and blood, word and spirit, and who was buried on the day of the passover [sic], the stone being placed upon the tomb.[34]
>
> * "Lifted up" is clearly a reference to crucifixion. Crucifixion was done by using either cross-membered poles (†) or a single pole. The term unicorn could imply that the writer believed that Christ's death was on a single pole. The traditional belief that Christ was crucified on cross-membered poles matches the blood stains on the Shroud of Turin which will be discussed later.

Christ died and was buried shortly before dusk and the beginning of the Passover per Pharisaic timing, which started as 15 *Nisan* began. Therefore, as stated, the Last Supper had to have been the evening before, as 14 *Nisan* began. The early church understood both that Christ ate

His Last Supper on 14 *Nisan*, a day ahead of the commonly practiced Passover, and that it was on a Tuesday evening.[35] Chapter 17 will deal with the Tuesday evening timing of the Last Supper and prove a Wednesday Crucifixion.

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How the 14 *Nisan* Passover Meal Became Regarded as 15 *Nisan*

As shown, the Old Testament instructs a 14 *Nisan* Passover. Today, because of the Pharisaic custom of counting the day from the evening, the Passover meal celebration is considered to be after the date becomes 15 *Nisan*.

Scripture appears to record that during ancient Israelite history the day was counted from the morning (Exodus 12:6-8). It says the Passover meal was to be eaten on the night when the lamb was killed without saying it was a different day. Some say the Sadducees embraced such a morning start to the 24 hour-day until their order disappeared in the first century A.D.[36] Moses instituted the Jewish calendar based on the lunar understanding of the Egyptians. It is no stretch to suggest Moses and the ancient Israelites maintained the Egyptian understanding of the day. The Egyptians most likely held the day began at dawn.[37] The Essenes and their custom of counting the day from midnight also vanished from Jewish culture with time.

The Pharisees were the undisputed leaders and teachers of the Jews after the temple's destruction in A.D. 70. After that point, they dictated customs and interpreted the laws for the Jews. Their teachings, including when the day begins, continue to dominate Jewish culture. Again, by Pharisaic timing the slaughter of the lamb is on 14 *Nisan* and the meal, commencing after dusk, is 15 *Nisan*.

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Chapter 15 Summary

The Jews were to remove leaven from their homes on the Day of Preparation, one day before the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread began. This additional day is why some regard the feast as an eight-day event. Correctly translated, all four Gospels teach the Lord's Last Supper was on the Day of Preparation before the feast, at the beginning of the eight-day "unleavened" period.

The Last Supper served as a Passover meal for Christ and His disciples. Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God was the fulfillment of God's plan for deliverance, just as the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt saved the children of Israel. The Last Supper had all the normal components of a Passover meal, including a lamb, as supported by the Greek text of Luke 22:7-8. Scripture gives enough clues to piece together where Jesus might have obtained, kept, and evaluate the lamb which was consumed during the Passover/Last Supper, in accordance with Scriptural mandates.

There were different religious customs regarding Passover within the various groups of Judaism during the time of Christ's ministry. The day and timing of Christ's Passover/Last Supper celebration followed the Old Testament law precisely. Its timing was in accordance with the pre-exilic Jewish calendar. Further, it is entirely possible that before the exile of the Jews to Babylon, and even for some time after, the sacrifice of the lamb occurred based on the strict understanding of "between the two evenings" – after dusk and before dark. Nevertheless, Jesus died when the majority of Passover lambs were slaughtered, according to the timing taught by the Pharisees. There is ancient written evidence supporting the accuracy of the Biblical accounts and a Tuesday evening, 14 *Nisan*, Last Supper in the year of Christ's Crucifixion.

Chapter 16
The Date of Christ's Trial and Crucifixion

Scriptural Account of the Events of Christ's Trials and Crucifixion

Timing Information Provided through Jewish Custom and Law, Roman Law, and the Scriptural Record

How Christ Was Condemned by 6 a.m.

The Gospel Records Corroborate the Timing of the Trials and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

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*Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about **the sixth hour**. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" They therefore cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered him, "We have no king but Caesar." So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.* (John 19:14-16)

*And it was **the third hour** when they crucified Him. And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."* (Mark 15:25)

Scriptural Account of the Events of Christ's Trials and Crucifixion

The religious leaders had a plan. It was carefully contrived, perfectly timed, and well-orchestrated. They had determined Jesus would be arrested before the feast began. They knew pushing a confrontation during the feast could result in a riot (Mark 14:2 and John 7:10-13). They hired a spy, Judas Iscariot, who, they were

confident, could aid in the arrest of Christ. Not only could he lead their agents to Christ, but Judas could also identify Jesus by a kiss to prevent any attempt to hide Christ or trick those coming to arrest Him (Matthew 26:48).

Following the arrest, Jesus was taken first to the home of Annas, who was referred to as high priest (Luke 22:54, John 18:12-13). Annas retained this title as a former high priest. Conveniently, he was also father-in-law of the current High Priest Caiaphas. At Annas' home, multiple witnesses were prepared to give false testimony against Christ. Having wanted Jesus dead for some time, those invited to Annas' home justified to themselves that Jesus deserved to die for blasphemy! Jesus Christ was then turned over to temple guards who mocked and abused Him (Luke 22:63-71).

After being assaulted by the guards, in the waning hours of the night, they sent Christ to Caiaphas with whom a quorum of the Sanhedrin was already gathered (Matthew 26:57, John 18:24). Expedited by the unofficial inquisition led by Annas, they came to an immediate unanimous decision at Caiaphas' official meeting of the Sanhedrin. Thus, in the early morning, only hours after Jesus Christ's arrest, their formal decision was made – Jesus must be Crucified (Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66 - 23:1).

However, the religious leaders had a problem. They knew Roman law did not concern itself with a charge of blasphemy.[1] Yet Roman law was loose in interpreting, and brutal in punishing, treason. Therefore, only minutes after condemning Jesus for blasphemy, and in full agreement, the religious leaders deceitfully bring a completely different charge against Christ before Governor Pilate. They accused Him of treason! (Luke 23:2)

Please understand, the whole Sanhedrin was not present for their inquisition or trial.[2] Mark 14:55 states, "Now the chief priests and **the whole Council** kept trying to obtain

testimony against Jesus to put Him to death; and they were not finding any." Yet "whole Council" means every member of the council who was **present** was trying to convict Christ. It does not mean everyone who was a legal member of the council **was** present. A legal quorum to conduct business by the Sanhedrin was 23 in attendance of its usual 71 members.[3] Certainly, Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:51) and Nicodemus were not invited. The people present at Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin were there by invitation after careful selection.

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Timing Information Provided through Jewish Custom and Law, Roman Law, and the Scriptural Record

Jewish Custom and Law

The inquisition at the home of Annas and the proceedings under Caiaphas at a second location were not normal or legal. Much can be said in this regard. Some cite the outlandish actions of the religious leaders recorded by Scripture as grounds to refute the Gospels' accounts regarding the timing of the events. They do not believe the Sanhedrin dealt with a capital offense in a night session. Although books have been written debating the legality of the Jewish trial of Jesus Christ, only one chronological issue regarding the events will be considered here.

Old Testament law banned all work on Sabbaths (Exodus 31:15), which included the feast days (Leviticus 23). This prohibited a judge from hearing a trial on a Sabbath. Beyond Scripture, the Talmud specifically records a tradition forbidding a capital trial to begin on the day **before** a Sabbath or feast day because the trial may take two days. This regulation forbade the start of the trial of Christ on 14 *Nisan*, because it may have continued until 15 *Nisan*.[4] Therefore, the proceedings led by the religious leaders against Jesus on 14 *Nisan* were illegal. Because

the religious leaders were not following their own rules, those rules are not reliable evidence to prove the timing of the events. Yet their own writings, which self-indict, document the dating of their actions.

The Talmud has citations that make very weighty arguments for 14 *Nisan* being the night of the Last Supper, Christ's arrest, and trial. One citation, Sanhedrin 43a, contains a blasphemous account of the killing of Christ. It records they "stoned him and hung his corpse on Passover eve."[5] The account in this section of the Talmud does not match history or stand to reason.[6] It does not match history as Christ was crucified according to the dictates of Roman law, not stoned. It also does not make common sense as the violation of Roman law would have by that law necessitated the religious leaders' executions for usurping the authority of capital punishment. Perhaps such an offense to Roman Law could be overlooked in a small town regarding a girl who was pregnant without a husband, if it had occurred. The murder of the most popular Jew in the country at the risk of revolution could not and would not have been ignored.

Sanhedrin 43a asserts the religious leaders had the authority and power to act in judgment on Christ. Yet the date of 14 *Nisan*, which they themselves report in the section, violated another Jewish regulation. Once an offender deserving of capital punishment had been convicted at a trial (which again was required to start at least two days before a feast, in this case 13 *Nisan*) there was an additional requirement. They were supposed to kill "seducers of the people or false prophets" **on** one of the three major feast days. 15 *Nisan* was one of these allowable feast days for an execution, 14 *Nisan* was not.[7]

The religious leaders exaggerated their power. Further, if the execution was the result of their actions, they indict themselves with their own record. The trial and the execution were not on legal days per their rules. Yet their record supports that the date of the Crucifixion is indeed

14 *Nisan*. If they were inventing a date, they would not have picked one that violates their own regulations.

Another Talmudic citation pertinent to chronology relates to the release of Barabbas. The timing of his pardon by Pilate documents the Jewish inquisitions of Jesus transpired during the first half of 14 *Nisan* before the morning. Barabbas was released after dawn during the second half of 14 *Nisan*. The practice of a 14 *Nisan* release of one prisoner each year was a Jewish custom. It probably dates to the Hasmonean period in the second century B.C.[8]

Since it had become an expected tradition of the Jews, the custom had been adopted by the Romans. Roman rulers saw it as a means to keep the masses of pilgrims, who were visiting for the feast, placated (Mark 15:6, Luke 23:17, and John 18:39).[9] Talmudic citation *Mishnah Pesachim* 8, 6 discusses the legalities of Passover celebration for prisoners in light of the fact that regularly some were freed from "heathen" prisons on 14 *Nisan*.[10] Such a provision in the *Mishnah* supports the Scriptural account of the custom of releasing a prisoner before Passover on 14 *Nisan*.

Roman Law

The religious leaders knew, as historian Josef Blinzler records, "Romans usually began their legal trials shortly after sunrise."[11] The religious leaders had arranged for such a sunrise trial of Christ before Pilate on 14 *Nisan* in order to have Jesus killed before Passover and the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Writings of ancient historians Philo and Josephus document a 15 *Nisan* trial would have also violated Roman law. They record Emperor Augustus' edict that no Jew was to be forced to appear before a court on the Sabbath, or after 9 a.m. of the day preceding the evening start of a

Sabbath.[12] In addition, there are a few other points of interest regarding Roman history and law relating to the Jews and, therefore, to the trial of Christ.

Roman law allowed the Jews to execute anyone who violated the Temple. Roman law also made violations of Jewish religious rites punishable offenses. However, blasphemy was neither considered a violation of the Temple nor a violation of a Jewish religious rite. As stated, blasphemy was considered a meaningless charge in a Roman court. This fact is why the religious leaders presented Jesus to Pilate with the charge of insurrection saying:

> …We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King. (Luke 23:2 NASB)

"Misleading our nation and forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar" is treason. Further, John 19:15 records their assertion, Christ was guilty of insurrection, a form of treason, for claiming to be the "Son of God" as they implied the claim was a political threat to the emperor.

It is commonly known that there was animosity during this time between the Jews and the Roman government. Therefore, one might ask why a Roman procurator would show any deference to the Jewish leaders and why did any part of Jewish law matter to the Roman Governor, Pilate. A short explanation may provide some understanding of this issue.

Since 50 B.C., Rome had given the Jews special rights and privileges in the empire exceeding those of other groups.[13] This favorable disposition dates back to the alliance Judas Maccabeus of Israel initiated with Rome during his reign c. 166 - 161 B.C.[14] Below is the decree drafted by the Roman Senate as recorded in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (bolding added):

> **The decree of the senate concerning a league of assistance and friendship with the nation of the Jews.** It shall not be lawful for any that are subject to the Romans to make war with the nation of the Jews, nor to assist those that do so, either by sending them corn, or ships, or money. And if any attack be made upon the Jews, the Romans shall assist them, as far as they are able; and, again, if any attack be made upon the Romans, the Jews shall assist them. And if the Jews have a mind to add to, or to take away anything from, this league of assistance, that shall be done with the common consent of the Romans. And whatsoever addition shall thus be made, it shall be of force.[15]

This alliance was confirmed to the benefit of the Jews as Josephus records:

> The senate then confirmed what had been formerly decreed concerning their friendship with the Jews, and gave them letters to carry to all the kings of Asia and Europe, and to the governors of the cities that they might safely conduct them to their own country.[16]

Notice this alliance was formed during the years of the Roman Republic. Yet it remained in force after Rome became a dictatorship. Over time the Roman disposition towards the Jews rose and fell depending upon the Caesar who was in leadership and his appointees. The last significant ruling in the Jews' favor was by Claudius in A.D. 53, 25 years after Christ's Crucifixion, when he sided with the Jews against their enemies in Alexandria.[17] However, Claudius' successor, Nero, ruled against the Jews in a dispute with the Greeks. This ruling helped precipitate the war between Rome and the Jews that began in A.D. 66. This war culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.[18]

Although Roman procurators did not generally know or care about the intricacies of Jewish law, during the early first century it was their choice whether to judge Jews in trial based upon Roman law or Jewish law.[19] Nevertheless, it is incorrect to say Jewish law resulted in Jesus' death. Neither did the decision of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus Christ directly cause His Crucifixion. They did not have the authority to kill Christ. It was Pilate, granted authority by God through the emperor, that condemned Christ per Roman law. The Gospel of John meticulously records this fact in John 19:11-16.

Pilate was not concerned which Jewish religious teacher was popular. He did not care about the Jews' theology, nor for the Jews as a people. In fact, Pilate's appointment as Governor over Judea in A.D. 26 by Sejanus, supreme prefect under Tiberius, was no doubt due to their mutual hatred of the Jews and Pilate's reputation for cruelty.[20] What Pilate cared about was how things affected Rome and himself; and Rome cared about treason. Thus, the high priest brought the accusation Jesus Christ was "stirring up the people" against Rome (Luke 23:5).

The broad and vague definition of treason under Roman law is documented in Suetonius writings. He records Tiberius' execution order of an upstanding citizen for the offense of accepting an honor that had been voted to him by his town council on the anniversary of a date Caesar Augustus had been honored.[21] Rome's *Lex Lulia Maiestratis* (Law of Treason) included any action encouraging friends of Rome to become her enemies.[22] The Jews had accused Jesus of exactly that crime by falsely accusing Him of stirring up the people against Rome by speaking against Roman taxation, and claiming to be a (political) king. If Christ had done either of these things, He was a traitor in the eyes of Rome.

Pilate cooperated in Christ's arrest, as will be discussed. Nevertheless, the religious leaders and the Roman governor had different interests and strategies from the

beginning of their joint conspiracy. Clearly, if they were not at cross purposes before Christ was arrested, after Pilate's wife gave the governor a warning from God, their plans and objectives diverged.

Just like the religious leaders, Pilate also had a plan. He was aware Jesus had many supporters. It was clear to anyone in Jerusalem, especially a politician like Pilate, things were coming to a head. A direct conflict between the followers of Christ and the followers of the religious leaders would have been a problem for the governor. Worse still, if either the followers of the priests or the followers of Jesus Christ turned their anger against Rome it could result in open rebellion.

Pilate wanted to mollify the rage of the religious leaders. Thus, Pilate provided the order to arrest Jesus and the troops necessary for the task. Nevertheless, He did not want to murder Jesus Christ and enlarge the ranks of the zealots with His followers. Pilate believed and hoped a release of Jesus after his arrest was the solution to his problem

There were two methods Pilate had available to release Jesus. Basing his action on an attempt to satisfy the crowd, he could grant Christ an *abolitio*, which was an acquittal of a prisoner charged but not yet condemned in a Roman court.[23] Yet if Pilate released Jesus without even evaluating the charges, he would have taken two great risks. He would chance a riot by enraging the religious leaders he was trying to placate. And even more threatening, he would become vulnerable to the accusation he was dismissive of the possibility of treason against the emperor. The presentation of such evidence in Rome would likely get Pilate executed.

Pilate's strategy all along must have been to employ the other method to alleviate his problem, using the customary 14 *Nisan* release for Jesus Christ. In doing so, Pilate could prove he took the charges seriously; he could

avoid direct conflict with the religious leaders regarding whether Jesus was guilty or not; and he could avoid a riot which could result from killing the rabbi beloved by so many followers. This theory is supported by Scripture which makes it clear Pilate tried repeatedly to persuade the crowd to ask for Jesus to be released through this method.

Using the lone 14 *Nisan* release for Jesus would also remove another problem. There was a second popular prisoner Pilate had in custody. However, unlike Jesus, this criminal, Barabbas, was a legitimate threat to the peace of the region. Using the 14 *Nisan* release for Jesus would negate the pressure of a crowd demanding Pilate free a man who had participated in a murderous insurrection.

The religious leaders had accused Jesus of treason. Yet a charge is not proof. It appears Pilate wanted to rule out the charge of treason when He asked Christ if He was a King, expecting Him to say, "No." This answer would make Jesus only guilty of annoying people who were annoying Pilate.

To Pilate's shock, his plan became impossible when Jesus honestly stated, that while His Kingdom was not of this world, yes, He did have one. In addition, under Pilate's questioning, Jesus allowed through indirect phrasing that He was the "King of the Jews" and through silence, He was the "Son of God" (Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:3, and John 18:33-38). Pilate would not have dreamed Jesus would make such revelations and thereby condemn Himself. Allowing oneself to be called a king or claiming to have a kingdom outside of Roman authority within Roman territory was definitely treasonous under Roman law.

The prescribed punishment for treason in the provinces for those who were not citizens of Rome was crucifixion. The religious leaders had outmaneuvered Pilate, and they had done so because they understood Jesus better. Pilate

assumed Jesus would be a coward because, as events would show, Pilate was probably a coward. The religious leaders had time and again confronted Jesus, and while they did not like His answers, they had observed Christ's courage. They knew Christ would not deny being who He claimed to be. While Pilate's plan was falling apart, the religious leaders' plan was coming together.

After hearing Jesus' answers, Pilate became very troubled. Jesus' words had provided the evidence necessary to convict Him. Yet there was more at play in their conversation. As is evaluated in the appendix: "**Of Titles and Coins**", Pilate's prior position was as a priest in the emperor cult where he led others in the worship of humans who were supposedly "gods." Pilate's theology allowed for the possibility Jesus Christ could be a "son of God." Killing such an individual terrified Pilate. Therefore, freeing Christ with the annual 14 *Nisan* pardon would provide not only an escape for Jesus, but also one for Pilate. Pilate had Jesus scourged and then again appealed to the crowd for support to release Him.

The scourging changed nothing. The religious leaders knew their schemes were nearing success. At this point they upped the ante by openly threatening Pilate with blackmail. They warned Pilate, should he not inflict the traitor's punishment of crucifixion upon Jesus, they would accuse him of being no friend of Caesar (John 19:12). Worse, the crowd had become an angry mob. Pilate had already been cautioned by Rome to keep peace and order.[24] If Pilate did not quell the disturbance and a revolt began because he was slow to punish a traitor, his life would likely be forfeited.

Pilate understood not only the ramification of Christ's words, but also the validity of the threats of the religious leaders. He understood the predicament of Jesus Christ had become his own. He was trapped – checkmate! He could either give Jesus Christ the death the religious leaders demanded, or he himself would almost certainly be

doomed to be punished as a traitor.[25] He would be charged with disregarding Rome's instructions, by no less than releasing an enemy of the state. In the emperor's eyes, Pilate would himself be a traitor.

If the emperor were so inclined, the punishment for treason for an elite citizen, like a senator, could be as lenient as banishment. Pilate did not have such status, nor did he have such favor. He could not hope for such a fate. Being a Roman citizen would spare him from crucifixion, but not a death sentence. The middle level of punishment would almost certainly be his fate should he release Christ in the face of such charges and evidence. Pilate would have received the more merciful death sentence of "being thrown to wild beasts in the circus."[26] Pontius Pilate was compelled to do what he clearly did not want to do - crucify Christ.

Christ was not ignorant of what His words meant. He, or any Jew, would have understood the suggestion one had their own kingdom within the Roman Empire was treasonous. Christ's response destined Him for Crucifixion. In effect, Jesus' answer meant He truly laid down His own life (John 10:17-18).

For Whom Did Jesus Die?

Christ took the place of Barabbas on a cross. It is also correct Christ's truthful answers forced the death of either Him or Pilate due to the charge of treason per Roman law.[27]

There is a profound observation to make at this point. While Barabbas had no choice regarding Christ dying in his place, Pilate made the choice to have Christ die instead of him. These men are a metaphor.

In one sense everyone is like Barabbas, the choice was made that Christ would die allowing them to be saved without them having any say in the matter (John 3:16). In another way everyone is like Pilate. Each person must choose whether to allow Christ's death to save them from judgment and a sure death sentence or not.

Scriptural Record

John's Gospel documents information that would have definitely mattered to his audience, the Jews of the Diaspora. Most of these Jews would have known Roman culture and law. John 19:13 records Pilate sat in the judgment seat to pronounce Jesus' death sentence as required by Roman law. The emperor's representative had to sit in the judgment seat when sentencing capital punishment as it reflected the authority was not resident in the magistrate himself but was by designation from Caesar. To pronounce a death sentence while not in a judgment seat was to assert the magistrate had authority over life and death within himself. Such a declaration of power would itself have been considered treason.[28] History even records the specific customary words Pilate would have used in judgment "*Ibis in crucem*" (go to the cross).[29]

As stated, Augustus' edict concerning trials for Jews made

it illegal to have a Jew in court after 9 a.m. on the eve of a Sabbath day.[30] John records the trial was completed by 6 a.m. (John 19:14). John's account and Roman law confirm three things:

1) They agree about the trial being completed by 6 a.m.;

2) They verify Pilate had declared the sentence himself by Roman authority in accordance with Roman law regarding treason, not merely putting his stamp of approval on the decision of a Jewish court; and

3) Because Christ's trial was completed in the early morning, there was adequate time for Him to be on the cross by 9 a.m. on 14 *Nisan*.

***

How Christ Was Condemned by 6 a.m.

Some might ask, "How could so much be accomplished between prayer in the garden and 6 a.m.?" Christ was:

1) arrested;
2) taken to the home of Annas for an inquisition;
3) transferred to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin for "trial";
4) beaten and tormented by the temple guards;
5) taken to Pilate's home/office for trial;
6) questioned by Pilate;
7) sent by Pilate to Herod Antipas;
8) returned by Herod Antipas to Pilate;
9) scourged and mocked by soldiers;
10) rejected by the crowd as they screamed, "crucify Him!";
11) condemned to crucifixion by Pilate.

The answer is that the framework of the events had been predetermined through a conspiracy between the Jewish religious leaders and Roman Governor Pilate. According to Matthew 26:3-4, the conspiracy was laid out in Caiaphas' home two days before the arrest of Christ.

If Pilate had no representative at the strategy meeting, the plan was certainly submitted to the governor and approved by him before the arrest occurred.[31] This fact is proven when the Greek texts of the Gospels are examined, thus providing the reason everything could be accomplished so quickly.

One may have believed Christ's arrest was accomplished by a small number of troops, perhaps to avoid arousing a crowd. This assumption has been dramatized in movies with a relatively small group of men taking part. However, this scenario conflicts with both Scripture and common sense.

Matthew 26:47 says they came with a "great multitude" of people. English translations of John 18:3 and 12 often say a "cohort" of troops aided in the arrest of Jesus Christ. "Cohort," which means a group of people, does not do justice to the Greek word being translated. The word used in both verses is *spĕira* (SGW #4686). This word represents a specific size unit of Roman soldiers. A legion during this period was 6000 men. A *spĕira* of infantry equaled 1/10 of a legion, or 600 men. Blinzler suggests the word *spĕira* in this period could also have referred to a smaller unit of 200-300 men called a *maniple*.[32] Even if one considers Blinzler's smaller number to be correct, which does not seem to match the text, it must be recognized the group was hundreds of soldiers plus the temple officials and guards. John 18:12 adds the information that the *spĕira* was led by their *chiliarchŏs* (SGW #5506). A *chiliarchŏs* was in command of 1/10 of a legion. This position was equivalent to the rank many contemporary armies would consider spanning from a Major to a Colonel.

The Expositor's Greek Testament for John 18:12 says it this way, "The Roman soldiers, under the orders of their *chiliarchõs* (*Tribune*, Colonel) abetted the officers of the Sanhedrin in the apprehension of Jesus." The soldiers were no doubt part of the contingent assigned to the Tower of Antonia adjacent to the Temple. The tower was a barracks and citadel for Roman soldiers to aid the temple officials as needed, or if necessary, to exert Roman will.[33]

Consider, would it have been wise to send a small unit of troops barely larger than the group of disciples out of concern for the sentiments of the masses? Or would it have been wiser to come with overwhelming force? Clearly, a small detachment of soldiers is not only wrong based upon Scripture, but it is also wrong based upon logic.

As the region of Judea, and thus Pilate, did not have a full legion of troops at that time, this "colonel" was perhaps the highest-ranking Roman military officer in the area. This officer, or his immediate commander, would have been under the direct authority of Governor Pilate. It is safe to assume such a high officer would have had regular contact with Pilate. Further, hundreds of soldiers would not have been engaged in an action without the direction, or at least permission, of the governor.

Pilate must have known in advance of Jesus' arrest. He was clearly ready and waiting to have an early morning trial. This assertion is supported by the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges where it says:

> …that the arrest of Jesus was expected to produce a crisis is shewn by the presence of the chief officer of the cohort (John 18:12). The Jewish hierarchy had no doubt communicated with Pilate, and his being ready to try the case at so early an hour as 5 a.m. may be accounted for in this way.[34]

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The Gospel Records Corroborate the Timing of the Trials and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

It may appear the Gospels of John and Mark are mutually exclusive. John 19:14-16 says the trial ended at the sixth hour. Mark 15:25 says Christ was crucified at the third hour. There is no conflict here. John used Roman timekeeping, meaning the sixth hour was 6 a.m., Mark used the timekeeping of the Jewish common people. Therefore, Mark's Gospel counts hours from daylight, using a 12-hour period beginning around 6 a.m. In Mark's Gospel "the third hour" represents 9 a.m. The timing used in the Gospels is evaluated in the appendix titled "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**."

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Chapter 16 Summary

The Gospels provide proof the trials and Crucifixion of Christ began in the middle of the night 14 *Nisan*. The religious leaders and Pilate's government had conspired to arrest Jesus Christ. Yet their goals were entirely different. After the arrest, Pilate had planned to ultimately release Jesus. The religious leaders had a sinister plan – the murder of Jesus Christ through crucifixion.

The trial and Crucifixion of Christ as described in Scripture were not in compliance with Jewish law or custom. This chapter specifically proves the violation of Jewish law related to both the date of the trial and the date of the execution. This fact is interesting but legally irrelevant as Christ was not killed due to any authority of the Jews. Christ's Crucifixion and its timing, as carefully described in Scripture, was in accordance with the requirements of Roman law.

With Christ's Crucifixion, the religious leaders, no doubt, counted themselves victorious; and Pilate was likely traumatized. However, neither the religious leaders nor Pilate controlled the events of the trial or execution of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus' choice to reveal the truth about Himself and His kingdom to Pilate that determined the course of events leading to His Crucifixion. Christ had laid His own life down, and He would take it up again (John 10:18).

Chapter 17
The Day of the Week of the Crucifixion

Recognition of Historical Dates Versus Recognition of Days of the Week

Various Fasts and the Feast of "The Lord's Passover/Last Supper"

Political Control of Religious Expression

From Recognition of a Wednesday Crucifixion to the Teaching of a Friday Crucifixion

Scripture Itself Reveals the Day of the Week of the Crucifixion

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Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man, and the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. (John 19:31-34)

... After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore and took away His body. Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a

hundred pounds weight.
So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:38-42)

Recognition of Historical Dates Versus Recognition of Days of the Week

As the gospel spread, the apostles did not teach rites and customs identically. There is evidence the apostles either adapted or embraced customs based upon how they would be understood or received within the local community in which they ministered.[1] Such flexibility allowed differing traditions to develop across the Church.

The day of the week the Crucifixion occurred was not an issue when the Church used a Jewish calendar or regarded as important the dating of Jewish religious feasts. For the **first century** Church, the Old Testament Passover requirements fulfilled by Christ's death were tied to dates on the Jewish lunar calendar, not days of the week.

They also focused on the date they celebrated the Resurrection, 18 *Nisan*, not the day of the week the tomb was discovered empty, a Sunday. 18 *Nisan* does not fall on a Sunday every year. Again, the annual alignment of the feast dates changed in relation to the days of the week with the Jewish calendar. This date orientation remained the standard in the eastern part of the Church until pressure forced these churches to change.

As the Church expanded and became dominated by gentile believers, the Jewish customs and calendar carried less influence with the Church as a whole. This

phenomenon was particularly true in the western provinces. Tensions developed in the second century as parts of the Church, primarily in the west, moved away from the earlier Church customs of using the Jewish calendar and focusing on the importance of dates to an orientation based upon the day of the week events occurred during Christ's ministry.

By the end of the second century, the Western Church, led by the Church in Rome, demanded the Resurrection be recognized on a Sunday every year, regardless of the date.[2] This change was one of two issues causing separation between the western and eastern churches. The second issue was how fasts were conducted and the eastern custom of having "Last Supper" or "Passover" feasts.

***

Various Fasts and the Feast of "The Lord's Passover/Last Supper"

Eusebius' writings note the oldest tradition, which originated in Asia (areas closer to Israel), held the Last Supper was eaten on "the fourteenth day of the moon," 14 *Nisan*, without regard for the day of the week.[3] They record the primarily eastern custom of following date over day, also reiterating the continued understanding Jesus' Last Supper was on 14 *Nisan*. Yet Eusebius' statement says much more. It records that many within the Church continued to eat a meal in commemoration of Christ's Last Supper/Passover. To those in the east this custom was important because it honored the Lord and had been passed down by His disciples. Some shared this meal after the afternoon of 14 *Nisan* in commemoration of Christ's death at that time. These eastern believers asserted their tradition was taught to them by the Apostles John and Philip.[4] It would make sense John would be comfortable with Christian traditions matching Jewish timing as his focus was ministry to the Jews. Others shared this meal

on the night before the Resurrection was celebrated on the morning of 18 *Nisan*, asserting this custom was taught them by the Apostles Peter and Paul.[5] Peter and Paul establishing such a tradition makes sense because they ministered in Rome. The Church in Rome included many slaves. Slaves would have had more opportunity to attend special functions on a Saturday night rather than during a weekday night.

In the Eastern Church the primary focus of celebration was not the Resurrection, it was the redemption obtained through Christ's sacrifice at the moment of His death. Therefore, the most practiced fasting custom among these eastern Christians was to abstain from food for part of 14 *Nisan*, then end or suspend their fast at the time of Christ's death - 3 p.m.[6] After the cessation, or pause, of their fast they commemorated the "Passover of the Lord," by eating their Passover/Last Supper feast, at roughly the same time the Jews celebrated their Passover meal.[7] Notice the Christians use of "Passover" as a representation for the time of death of Christ.[8]

The Jewish believers within the Eastern Church would certainly want to teach their children the understanding of the connection between the Passover in Egypt and the escape from death accomplished by the blood of Christ. Having many Jewish believers within it, it was easy for the Eastern Church to comprehend Christ's death as the "Lamb of God" slain to save them as they partook of the Passover meal. The lamb in Egypt was indeed a foreshadowing illustration of the Lamb of Calvary.

Some who stopped their fast for the "Passover/Last Supper" feast are said to have resumed fasting through Sunday morning in recognition of the Resurrection.[9] Early church father and leader of the church in Gaul (France), Irenaeus[10] stated the early church practiced various lengths of fasting during Passion Week:

> Some, fast only one day; others two; others, again several days.[11]

The fasting customs of some churches, primarily within the eastern provinces, interrupted or shortened what the western church leadership thought was the correct fasting period. This action was perceived to be an offense so great as to almost be "a crime."[12]

Western Church leadership demanded a focus on personal sacrifice in spiritual preparation for the Easter season saying, "we take up the forty-day training period"[13] through the Resurrection. The western churches practiced a fast during the entire "great week."[14] Again, for the Western Church, the moment to celebrate was the Resurrection, recognized on a Sunday morning, not the point when redemption was obtained on the cross.

As stated, it was very irritating to church leaders in the west that some churches in the west and most churches in the east did not fast throughout Passion week.[15] Yet Emperor Constantine's writing strongly imply, the most offensive facet of ending the fast at 3 p.m. 14 *Nisan* was the subsequent feast that almost matched the Jews' practice. For him, a custom of the Church appearing like the practice of the Jews was not to be tolerated.

***

Political Control of Religious Expression

During the reigns of the four popes before the Council of Nicaea, there had been tension related to commemorating dates versus commemorating days of the week the Sacred events occurred as well as the timing of fasts. Yet even with this disagreement, there was freedom of religious practice as local churches maintained a level of autonomy.[16] This flexibility ended under Constantine.

Beginning when Emperor Augustus had himself declared "Pontifex Maximus" until the fall of the Roman empire, the emperor was accepted as not only being the head of state and commander of the army, but also the supreme authority of all religious matters within the empire. Thus, it must have seemed appropriate to Emperor Constantine, and normal to his subjects, he would assert himself into religious matters. (For more details of how the power and titles of the Roman empire expanded read the appendix, "**Of Titles and Coins.**")

To his credit, Constantine attempted to correct error and reconcile theological division regarding the Arian heresy through the work of his delegate Bishop Hosius of Cordova, Spain.[17] Because this effort failed, Constantine called the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) to address the issue. Constantine paid for the travel expenses of those who participated in the council as well as providing generously for their lodging and needs during the event.[18] He convened the Council of Nicaea with the support of the Bishop of Rome (Pope Sylvester I) who sent two personal representatives because his age and health prevented his attendance.[19] The emperor then participated in the council as the power behind his friend, Hosius, who presided over the council as its president.[20]

Constantine and the bishops in attendance at the Council of Nicaea articulated a firm position against the heresy of Arius. They did so by producing a creed named after the event that beautifully defended the dual nature of Christ and is an enunciation of the foundations of Christian orthodoxy.

Most important to this text, Constantine also tried at the council to "fix" the perceived disorder between local churches and provinces within the empire. These "problems" were celebrating events on different days, having differing customs regarding fasts, and apparently most egregious to Constantine - being associated with the Jews and their Passover observance. His solution,

reflected by the council, opposed the traditions that were followed mostly in the eastern churches. Enforcing the Roman Church's fast through the Resurrection and requiring its observance on a Sunday would "fix" two of the problems: putting date over day, and the breaking or pausing of fasts before the Sunday Resurrection celebration. The third "problem" of being associated with the Jews was fixed in another way. If the Church's calendar for the celebration of a Sunday Resurrection by chance matched the feast of the Jews in a particular year, the Church's celebration was to be shifted forward one month.[21] This third "fix" clearly demonstrates anti-Semitism was a motivating factor within the Church.

Constantine led in these efforts that did bring "unity," albeit forced, to the Church. This perceived victory forced the Church away from the customs God had instructed in the Old Testament. Losing both the facts and the lessons of history is a catastrophe.

The Church had tolerated their differences for many years. It can be argued from a natural perspective that as the Church suffered external persecution it could not indulge much internal prejudice and anti-Semitism. As persecution ended in the early fourth century, the Church had the time and energy to engage other pursuits. Fortunately, it could pursue purity by engaging worthy arguments, like battling the Arian heresy. Unfortunately, it could engage in unnecessary disagreements, like whether focus should be placed on dates or days of the week. Tragically, it could also indulge the sin of prejudice. With the absence of external strife, there was opportunity for all these internal matters to come to a head. It can also be argued from a spiritual perspective that once the evil one failed to kill the Church from the outside in its infancy, he attempted to corrupt it and divide it internally in its youth.

The timing of the Council of Nicaea and its decisions concerning calendar date versus days of the week, fasting

practices, and feasting at the time of Passover, were all clearly driven by two major factors. First, whereas some churches had embraced the Jewish calendar, there were sects and cults like the Ebionites who not only respected the Jewish roots of the Church but also sought to merge Old Testament rituals and theological error with the New Testament gospel.[22] By the time of Constantine, this corruption was becoming widespread. Second, the anti-Semitism common to the age had clearly taken root in the heart of Constantine and others in the Church. This evil attitude is reflected in his letter that follows.

Because of the Judaizer sects/cults and anti-Semitism, the council adopted a "truer order" demanding the Resurrection be celebrated on Sunday.[23] This "truer order" eliminated regard for Jewish feast dating rooted in God's commands within the Old Testament stripping or weakening the messages they taught. Here is Constantine's decision and his direction for the Church:

> Constantinus Augustus to the Churches....
>
> At this meeting [Council of Nicaea] the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day [Sunday]. For what can be more becoming or honorable to us than that this feast from which we date our hopes of immortality, should be observed unfailingly by all alike, according to one ascertained order and arrangement?
>
> And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. For we have it in our power, if

we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages, by a truer order, which we have preserved from the very day of the Passion until the present time.

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Savior a different way. A course at once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness. For their boast is absurd indeed, that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things. For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their parricidal guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of ungoverned passion and are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them? Hence it is that on this point as well as others they have no perception of the truth, so that, being altogether ignorant of the true adjustment of this question, they sometimes celebrate Easter twice in the same year....

... pray continually that the purity of your souls may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men. We must consider, too, that a discordant judgment in a case of such importance, and respecting such religious festival, is wrong...

... but also that it is most fitting that all should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews. In fine [brief], that I may express my meaning in as few words as possible, it has been

> determined by the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day [Sunday]. For on the one hand a discrepancy of opinion on so sacred a question is unbecoming, and on the other it is surely best to act on a decision which is free from strange folly and error...
>
> God preserve you, beloved brethren![24]

No doubt, the force of Emperor Constantine's passions steered the course of events. His efforts resulted in the rejection of the Jewish timing of Passion Week and locked in a Sunday Resurrection celebration regardless of its date. This position in turn pushed Church leadership toward belief in a Friday Crucifixion that affixed in the next century. Here is the wording contained in the Synodal letter summarizing the work of the council on the subject:

> … We further proclaim to you the good news of the agreement concerning the holy Easter, that this particular also has through your prayers been rightly settled; so that all our brethren in the East who formerly followed the custom of the Jews are henceforth to celebrate the said most sacred feast of Easter at the same time with the Romans and yourselves and all those who have observed Easter from the beginning.[25]

To Constantine's shame, his display of anti-Semitic bigotry at the council and the actions of the Council, no doubt influenced by those words, formally moved the Church away from timing related to Jewish feasts handed down by the Apostles. These teachings had been followed closely by many, mostly in the eastern regions of the empire.[26] This damaged the ability of the Church to reach the Jews for Christ and stripped away some of the underpinnings of the Christian faith.

It is significant that Constantine and the council did not regard Jewish religious customs and feasts as a worthy basis for their dating of Christ's work. Rather, they erroneously claimed history external to the Jews for their sourcing and conclusion regarding when He was crucified.[27] Constantine's claim to a "truer order, which we have preserved" was folly. The Crucifixion's timing was rooted in the events of the Jewish Passover season. The rejection of the correct timing was not "truer." Nor was there another timing that had been "preserved." Although, there were efforts to manufacture such evidence. See appendix, "**Christmas Dates Errantly Attached to Hippolytus**." Constantine's letter reflects that it was by his own authority and "by the united judgment" of the council they declared the celebration of the Resurrection to be on a Sunday, regardless of the year and Old Testament/Jewish feast dating.

For those unfamiliar, the following is the text of the creed drafted at the Council of Nicaea.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen[28]

Migration from Recognition of a Wednesday Crucifixion to the Teaching of a Friday Crucifixion

As mentioned, during the year of the Crucifixion, 14 *Nisan*, the date of the Last Supper, began on a Tuesday night. Then, the Crucifixion was on a Wednesday afternoon. With time and because forces pushed for separation from the Jewish timing of the events of Passion Week, this information was lost as the Church came to believe other things.

In the Western Provinces

As the Church released itself from its roots anchored to the dates of Old Testament instructions, it began to drift. It moved, not only from the **dates**, but also from the correct **day of the week** events took place. Eusebius quotes Irenaeus' letter to Pope Victor where Irenaeus points out numerous traditions regarding fasting for Passion Week had already developed.[29] One of the fasts he mentions is confusing. The syntax concerning that fast can be construed to mean a 40-hour fast, which one scholar suggests points to a Wednesday arrest and a Friday Crucifixion. Another scholar asserts the wording means an 80-hour fast. [30] This longer period would match a fast from the time of darkness on the cross until a Saturday 8 p.m. Resurrection. It is not certain what Irenaeus meant with the period of hours. Yet as Eusebius records him, Irenaeus himself takes no stand in support of any specific fasting period or rule, suggesting openness toward all of them.[31]

When the Church abandoned belief in a Wednesday Crucifixion, its supplanting with the teaching of a Friday Crucifixion was supported with mystical reasoning. This blending of bad history with "spiritual" meanings is reflected in the writings of theologian Victorinus Petavionensis (aka Victorinus of Pettau, 250 - c. 303). Petavionensis was Bishop of Poetovio, a town in Slovenia, northeast of Italy. His work includes the use of the phrase and concept of "good Friday."[32] Petavionensis did not capitalize the word "good" in his text. He used the word as an adjective, not as a title. Petavionensis stated his belief this day was "good" for two reasons. First, on the sixth day of creation God gave life to mankind. Second, on the sixth day of the week, Friday, God provided spiritual life through Christ's Passion. Petavionensis' use of the words "good Friday" to describe the day of the "Passion" or Crucifixion was certainly among the first written examples of the use of this wording for this purpose.[33]

Church historian Eusebius (A.D. c. 260 - 339) writes the following in *On the Celebration of Pascha*. These words again demonstrate:

> Anti-Semitism,
>
> The eastern traditions descended to them from ancient times,
>
> The position gaining sway in the western provinces that the Last Supper was on a Thursday or Friday followed by the Crucifixion on Friday (using Roman timing beginning the day at midnight),
>
> And, Eusebius, and the Church as a whole, had conflated the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the weekly Sabbath. Those following Eusebius' lead may not have understood there were two Sabbaths in Holy Week, allowing the Greek texts to be misunderstood. Such an innocent error cannot be attributed to Eusebius personally. He was a Greek who revised the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint. He would have understood the Greek Gospel texts thoroughly. He was regarded as one of the most educated men of his day and would have also known that the Jews referred to and regarded their feasts as Sabbaths. Certainly, he would have understood Matthew records two Sabbaths during Holy Week and that Christ was Crucified before the first based on the texts of the Gospels.
>
> This distasteful but logical conclusion is unfortunately supported by other anti-Semitic actions Church leadership had taken. It is clear Eusebius and others in political and Church leadership intended to create a narrative separating the Church from its Jewish heritage.

Their choice required the twisting of the meaning of the Greek texts, which resulted in the loss of the understanding there were two Sabbaths in Holy Week. Confusion did not cause the loss of information. Evil motives erased information creating confusion. Eusebius' own words seem to prove this conclusion.

Here are Eusebius' words:

> When, however, the emperor most beloved of God was presiding in the midst of the holy Synod, and the question of the *Pascha* was brought forward, there was said all that was said. And three [fourths] of the bishops of the whole world had the advantage in numbers as they strove against those of the East: The peoples of the North, the South, and the Occident together, being fortified by their harmony, pulled in the opposite direction from those of the Orient, who were defending their ancient custom. But at the end of the discussion, the Orientals yielded, and thus there came to be a single festival of Christ—and thus they stood apart from the killers of the Lord, and were joined to those who hold the same doctrine. For nature draws like to like...
>
> But furthermore, the Savior did not celebrate the Pascha along with the Jews at the time of his [sic] passion...They [the Jews] were doing this [sacrificing the lambs] on the Preparation day on which the Savior suffered [Friday]; for this reason, they did not enter the praetorium, but instead Pilate came out to them. But he [sic] [Jesus] a full day earlier, on the fifth day of the week [Thursday], was reclining at table with his [sic] disciples, and as he [sic] ate with them he [sic] said, "I have very much desired to eat this Pascha with you."... Do you see how the Savior

> did not eat the *Pascha* along with the Jews? Because this was a new custom…[34]

In his statement, Eusebius called the Jews "the killers of our Lord." He can even be understood to suggest Christ intended a separation, not just in His timing of His Passover/Last Supper from Passover, but from the Jews themselves and their customs. His statement reflected Emperor Constantine's desire to separate the Church's ceremonies from those of the Jews. His words betray the anti-Semitic mood in the west also reflected in Constantine's statement presented at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325).

Another early documentation of the western Church's formal acceptance of a Friday Crucifixion is a correspondence between Proterius of Alexandria and Pope Leo I, dating from the **middle of the fifth century**. In his letter, Proterius discusses his own position and asserted it to be the accepted position common to his area, that Christ's crucifixion was on 15 *Nisan* and He rose on 17 *Nisan*.[35] His 15 *Nisan* can be confidently assigned to Friday and His 17 *Nisan* to Sunday. At this point it had been over 100 years that the Resurrection was always recognized on a Sunday, regardless of the date.

Proterius' letter is thus apparently advancing the claim the Crucifixion was on Friday, two days before a Sunday Resurrection. Pope Leo I's correspondence with Proterius (papal letter #133 c. A.D. 455) demonstrates Leo's willingness to accept the "superior dating" provided by the Alexandrian Church over even his local Roman sources.[36] Leo's comment seems to reflect the rejection of the date of the Crucifixion being 14 *Nisan* for the next date 15 *Nisan* and declaring it a Friday, both of which are historically unfounded. The correspondence also strongly implies not all the believers in Rome had completed the migration to a Friday Crucifixion endorsed by Eusebius. Remember the Nicene Creed did fit a Thursday Crucifixion well.

By the end of the fifth century, belief in a Friday Crucifixion and a Sunday Resurrection was also common in France.[37]

In the Eastern Provinces

Owing to pressure from western church leadership, changes were occurring in the eastern provinces by the third century. The issue of the day of the week of the events of Passion Week was in flux. *The Syriac Didascalia* (from northern Syria, c. 230) is one ancient document that reflects a shifting in beliefs as it adds a Friday Crucifixion to the teaching of a Wednesday arrest.[38] Other documents from the next few centuries also taught a Wednesday arrest or condemnation and a Friday Crucifixion. These documents include: *The Apostolic Constitutions* (probably originating in Antioch, Syria, c. A.D. 375), the *Teaching of Addai* (from Syria, c. A.D. 420), and *The Ethiopian Book of Adam* (an Eastern Church apocryphal book written in the sixth century).[39]

In the Hearts of the People

Since the Church's founding, local churches had the freedom to celebrate Passion Week in various ways.[40] This freedom existed until Rome forced compliance with its schedule. Belief in a Wednesday Crucifixion, although still taught for centuries, waned within the Church as it moved toward adopting a Thursday Last Supper and belief in a Friday Crucifixion.

As shown, the move toward preaching and teaching a Friday Crucifixion was justified through the mystical insertion of the creation narrative to the Crucifixion account as reflected in the writing of Victorinus Petavionensis. Although it seems clear the primary reason for the move was Constantine's prejudice and power directing the theology and practice of the Church, there

was a third reason for the shift to teaching a Friday Crucifixion. There was fear of the consequences of opposing the emperor and those in Church leadership.

If a pastor continued to preach the timing of a Tuesday Last Supper or a Wednesday, 14 *Nisan*, Crucifixion they would have been in conflict with the Nicene Creed that the emperor helped to establish. To espouse the Resurrection being on a day other than a Sunday or to commemorate the events of Passion Week on their correct Hebrew date would have placed a pastor in direct disobedience to the Emperor and the Church's official position. Teaching opposed to Church dogma or conducting such worship services would invite reprisal. A pastor could reasonably assume they would be deposed from their position and excommunicated from the church as punishment. Such was the case for Arius who resisted "correction" by the emperor and the council fathers of Nicaea.[41]

A preacher may have asked himself, "Do I hold to a small piece of truth and loss the opportunity to preach the rest of the Gospel, or do I stay out of trouble and preach all the other wonderful truths of Scripture? Certainly, timing does not matter that much." Cooperating with the Emperor would certainly lead to a longer ministry and an easier life. Further, one could justify teaching a Sunday Resurrection regardless of its date since it matches the record of the women's discovery at the empty tomb. It is understandable why preachers would submit to the demands of church leadership. Eventually celebrations recognizing the historically correct timing of Passion Week disappeared from the Church.

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Scripture Itself Reveals the Day of the Week of the Crucifixion

As the Church transitioned to a Friday Crucifixion it also lost the correct understanding of Christ being in the grave for a literal three days and three nights. Jesus' own words were replaced by a belief in a shorter period in the grave.

The Crucifixion could not have been on a Friday based upon a correct understanding of the Gospel accounts. The Greek texts clearly point to a Wednesday Crucifixion. The Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 12:40:

> Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights, in the heart of the earth.

The misunderstanding of Matthew 12:40 is caused by replacing the message communicated through the Greek words with a contemporary concept of "day" rendered in the English translations. Most people believe Jesus referred to a 24-hour period and that He said He would be in the grave for all or part of three of them. This belief is supported by the teaching in the Talmud that a part of a portion of time is equal to its whole.[42] This understanding of time was documented hundreds of years after Christ's ministry on Earth. There are two problems here. First, it is an assumption to project this position back to the first century. Second, Jesus did not use the word for a 24-hour period, as his message was recorded in the Greek texts.

If Jesus intended to communicate a 24-hour period, as commonly believed, He would have used wording translatable to the Greek word "*nuchthēmĕrŏn"* (SGW #3574). *Nuchthēmĕrŏn* is literally "night-day."[4] It means a 24-hour period and was in common usage. Paul uses the word *nuchthēmĕrŏn* to be clear he spent a 24-hour period "in the deep" after a shipwreck (II Corinthians 11:25).

Even with the broad Talmudic definition of a unit of time, a Friday Crucifixion is impossible based upon Christ's words. The Greek text of Matthew 12:40 is very specific. Jesus says He will be buried for three day-light periods and three nighttime periods. The Greek text translated in English versions as "day" is "*hēměra*" (SGW #2250). Then English translations render "night" for the word "*nux*" (SGW #3571). These words mean the roughly 12-hour part of the day that is either sunlit or in darkness respectively. If one accepts the Talmudic understanding of time, Christ's words should be understood that He said He would be in the ground for at least part of three sunlit periods and three nighttime periods.

Allowing the great latitude of the Talmudic understanding of time, the following is an examination of the Church's common teaching on the Crucifixion. Also, for understandability, the Jewish day and night periods, which began at dusk and dawn, are marked as 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. respectively. This analysis reflects that Christ died at approximately 3 p.m. and was in the grave by 5:59 p.m. and allows for the contemporary misunderstanding that Christ left the tomb after dawn – which does not match Scripture which has the women at the tomb at this point with Jesus gone.

Examining the possibility of a Friday Crucifixion using their correct Hebrew Calendar dates:

16 *Nisan* Friday	5:59 p.m. - 6 p.m.	1 minute = day
17 *Nisan*	6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
17 *Nisan* Saturday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day
18 *Nisan*	6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
18 *Nisan* Sunday	6 a.m. - 6:01 a.m.	1 minute = day

Even with the lenient interpretation allowing a part of a time period to equal the whole and a late Resurrection, there are only two nights. There is **no way** a Friday Crucifixion can be understood to match what Christ said as it is recorded in the Greek.

The correct understanding of the Greek translation of Matthew 12:40 does allow for the possibility of a Thursday Crucifixion, based upon the Talmudic concept of a part of a unit of time being counted as a whole.

Evaluating a Thursday Crucifixion:

15 *Nisan*	Thursday	5:59 p.m. - 6 p.m.	1 minute = day
16 *Nisan*		6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
16 *Nisan*	Friday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day
17 *Nisan*		6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
17 *Nisan*	Saturday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day
18 *Nisan*		6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night

With the Jewish concept of a piece of time equaling the whole, there were three days and three nights with a Thursday Crucifixion. However, if Christ were Crucified on a Thursday, there would have been no time for the women to buy or prepare spices between the Sabbaths! A correct understanding of the Greek translation of Matthew 28:1 makes a Thursday Crucifixion of Christ impossible.

Frankly, the very loose translations of Matthew 28:1 seen in most English versions allows for the misunderstanding Mark 16:1-2 and Luke 23:55 - 24:1 are mutually exclusive. Please consider the following translations of the three Synoptic Gospels. The translations of the verses from Mark and Luke are from the *New American Standard Bible*. The translation of Matthew 28:1 is the English part of this verse from *The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, Sr., general editor and translator.

Mark 16:1-2 says:

> When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week [*number* one of the seven sabbaths before the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, as will be

> explained] they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

Luke 23:55- 24:1 says:

> Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week [*number* one of the Sabbaths], at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing spices which they had prepared.

Did the women buy the spices after the Sabbath, or did they have the spices and prepare them before the Sabbath? Based upon a gentile's understanding, or one based on imprecise translation of the Greek, one of the accounts must be wrong. Yet they are not wrong or in conflict. A Jew would understand the days of the week when the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. The meanings also become clear with a correct translation of the Gospel of Matthew. With the proper understanding of Jewish culture and the Gospel of Matthew the Gospels complement each other.

Correctly translated, Matthew 28:1 says,

> After the sabbath**s**, at the dawning into the first of *the* sabbath**s** [*number* one of the Sabbaths], Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the grave.

Matthew says there was more than one Sabbath that week. His Gospel was written to primarily a Jewish audience. They understood there would be two Sabbaths in the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first Sabbath was the High Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which during the year of the Crucifixion began at dusk Wednesday evening as families began to eat the Passover meal (Leviticus 23:4-8).[44] The

second Sabbath was the regular weekly Sabbath, which began at dusk Friday. The three Gospels only match if the Crucifixion happened on one day - Wednesday.

Jesus Christ died and was quickly placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea just before the beginning of the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Nisan*. No one could have bought spices until the High Sabbath was over, after dusk Thursday. A Wednesday Crucifixion presents no problem with the women buying and preparing the spices during the day on Friday, as Mark's Gospel records. A Thursday Crucifixion does not provide time between what would have been a Thursday evening to Friday evening High Sabbath, and the start of the weekly Sabbath, Friday evening. There would have been no opportunity to buy or legally work on spices.

Luke's Gospel assumes the purchase of the spices but specifically says the women prepared them for the body of Jesus Christ, then rested as required by Jewish law during the weekly Sabbath (Friday evening – Saturday evening). According to Luke's account they must have done this during the day on Friday before the Sabbath began at dusk.

Another thing to notice is the very specific and precise phrase, "*number* one (first) of Sabbaths," used by all three of these Gospels. "Sabbath" means "rest." Yet in addition, the word "sabbath" can also mean "week" as it does in this case relating to the Feast of Weeks. God established this feast, as documented by instructions contained in Leviticus 23:15-16, to be after seven weeks are counted.

The Pharisees and contemporary Jews count the 49 days from the day of First Fruits, 16 *Nisan*, the day after the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This work cannot provide the point at which the Pharisees developed a different understanding of Leviticus 23:15-16 from the Sadducees. The Pharisees' position is documented and taught in the Talmud, which was

composed in the centuries after the demise of the Sadducees and Christ's Resurrection.

The Sadducees taught that the phrase "*number* one (first) of Sabbaths" was a specific point in the Jewish calendar from which to count toward the Feast of Weeks.[45] That point is the first Sunday after the weekly Sabbath day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Sadducees' position seems to match the natural reading of the instruction found in Leviticus 23:15. This Scripture says, "…from the day (morning) after the sabbath, from the day after you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths." This verse is translated in this manner or a similar fashion in the NASB, ESV, and KJV among others.

Notice, the Sadducaic understanding is supported by the end of the verse that states there shall be "seven complete (or perfect) sabbaths." Matthew's recording the day as the "first of the sabbaths" being on a Sunday morning supports the Sadducaic position and suggests it was generally followed by the Jews during the time of Christ's ministry on Earth. Since its founding, the Church has accepted the same position as the Sadducees that the 49-day count to the Feast of Weeks was to comprise 7 usual weekly periods following the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Greek speaking Jews and the early Church, however, call this day Pentecost, which means fiftieth.

If there had been a dichotomy regarding the counting of the seven Sabbaths (weeks) when the Gospels were written, it is not evident. It seems the phrase, "*number* one (first) of the Sabbaths" carried a clear meaning to the people in the first century. Therefore, the common English translation of "first day of the week" is not the best reflection of the writer's message of "first of the Sabbaths." It was not just "a Sunday" as a week began, it was a very **specific** Sunday as a very specific set of weeks began.

Translated and understood correctly, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are not in conflict regarding the women and the spices. Their records of Passion Week mesh together perfectly. The writers just told the story differently, and in some cases their Gospels have not been reflected in English by the best translation choices.

Matthew 27:62-64 also proves the Wednesday Crucifixion as well as Christ's Resurrection after three full days in the grave. This passage states the religious leaders came to speak with Pilate the morning after the Crucifixion, Thursday morning. At that meeting, Pilate gave them the Roman guards they wanted – "until the third day." The word day used in the Greek is the word *hēměra* (SGW #2250) meaning the sunlit part of the day. In other words, the guards were stationed at the tomb until the third morning. Therefore, the Roman guard detail would have completed their assignment at dawn Sunday morning, having started their watch Thursday morning.

The tomb was not in an obscure location. Many would have passed the area. It is logical to assume the information would have spread throughout town that guards were posted there until Sunday morning. The women arrived just after sunrise, the beginning of the *hēmera* (the morning part of Sunday because they believed it to be their first opportunity to attend to Jesus' body after burial. They assumed the Roman guards would be just completing their duty at that point and would be leaving.

The request of the religious leaders, Pilate's orders, and the women's actions all confirm that Christ would have been in the tomb for three 12-hour night periods and three 12-hour day periods.

The following is an analysis of a Wednesday Crucifixion:

15 *Nisan*	6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
15 *Nisan* Thursday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day
16 *Nisan*	6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
16 *Nisan* Friday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day
17 *Nisan*	6 p.m. - 6 a.m.	night
17 *Nisan* Saturday	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	day

Christ's Resurrection was after dusk Saturday evening as 17 *Nisan* ended, completing the 3 days and 3 nights of which Jesus spoke. His Resurrection could have occurred when the tomb was opened for later examination, or hours before. Perhaps this summary will aid in understanding:

Wednesday	Crucifixion
Thursday	First Sabbath: High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
Friday	The day when the women both bought and prepared the spices before the weekly Sabbath began in the evening. This day was after the High Sabbath and before the weekly Sabbath.
Saturday	Second Sabbath of the week: the regular weekly Sabbath ending at dusk after which Christ arose.
Sunday	First day of a new week - "into the first of the seven Sabbaths" counting toward Pentecost Sunday

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Chapter 17 Summary

Scripture and the early church taught the Last Supper was in the evening as 14 *Nisan* began, and Christ was crucified the next day - Wednesday. The passage of time, differing traditions, and sin resulted in the loss of dating information, the loss of the correct understanding of events, and conflict.

The accounts of the actions of the women provide two proofs of a Wednesday Crucifixion. First, they purchased and prepared spices for Christ's body on Friday, between the two Sabbaths of Passion week. Second, they visited the tomb after the soldiers' duties were completed on the third morning after a guard was established on Thursday morning.

Most importantly, Christ's declaration regarding His being in the grave for three daylight periods and three nighttime periods matches a Wednesday Crucifixion and makes a Friday Crucifixion impossible. While documentation of a Wednesday Crucifixion exists from the four Gospels themselves, support for a Friday Crucifixion does not appear until the third century. Nevertheless, due to the force of the Emperor and Church leaders the teaching of a Friday Crucifixion was widespread by the middle of the fifth century.

How to, and Not to, Handle Church Disputes

The disagreement between the western church leadership and church's primarily in the eastern provinces, became known as the Quartodeciman dispute. This name refers to the practice of fasting customs related to 14 *Nisan*. A brief consideration of this topic not only contributes toward understanding how the Church lost the recognition of a Tuesday Last Supper and Wednesday Crucifixion but also provides an opportunity to evaluate conflict resolution.

A difference in fasting custom and whether day or date was to guide commemorations of the Lord's work had developed into a conflict by 150 A.D. when Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna in the East, visited Anicetus, Bishop of Rome. The bishops debated the merits of their positions and could not agree on a solution that satisfied their sections of the Church. Rather than leave in conflict, they remained in "perfect friendship."[46] In brotherly love, they celebrated a worship service together. Anicetus, was even gracious, asking Polycarp to lead the communion service. These men's wisdom and example is instructive.

Disagreements which fester often produce bitterness and division. By the later part of the second century bishops from the two sections of the church avoided associating with each other.[47] Forces of darkness also exploited the division by warping the attitudes and teachings of more extreme elements of both groups. This conflict resulted in a letter from Bishop Victor of Rome sent in approximately A.D. 190 to Polycrates, a key leader of the churches in the East. The letter ordered Polycrates to cease 14 *Nisan* fasting and demanded conformity to the Roman Church's customs.

Polycrates refused to comply, citing the teaching of the Apostles passed forward through John the Beloved. He asserted John had authority as one who "wore the plate" as a priest.[48] I believe this reference metaphorically referred to the high priest's authority to carry the Urim and Thummim in his vestments. These items were used to decipher God's will. Polycrates believed John carried the authority to discern the will of God on the matter.[49] Therefore, Polycrates asserted, he would follow John's instructions rather than Victor's.

At this point, the church almost split, save for the counsel of several respected leaders, including Irenaeus.[50] Irenaeus likely discussed the issue extensively with his disciple, Hippolytus. Hippolytus was then "credited" with establishing a plan for celebrating the Lord's Passion as such a schedule is immortalized on a statue bearing his likeness. Certainly, Hippolytus may have developed and documented such a suggested schedule. Nevertheless, he openly opposed the centralization of power in the church and would have resisted compulsory obedience to such a schedule.

The council of Nicaea in 325 A.D included an attempt to force the eastern part of the church to submit to the western church leadership regarding the fasting customs of the season of Christ's Passion. Yet the council of Nicaea failed to immediately thwart the practices of the churches in the East entirely. Therefore, the Synod of Antioch in 341 A.D. excommunicated as "heretics" those who continued their fasting customs related to 14 *Nisan*.[51]

While it is true some in the broader community had carried Jewish custom too far, the sins of pride and anti-Semitism were also forces behind the fight over differing traditions. Ultimately, Quartodecimanism vanished in the sixth century.[52]

Chapter 18
The Length of Christ's Ministry and the Year of His Crucifixion

The Length of Christ's Ministry

Additional Evidence for the Year of the Crucifixion

Dating Information from a Fig Tree

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The Length of Christ's Ministry

Christ began to work privately with His disciples on 1 *Nisan* of A.D. 26, starting His public ministry two weeks later on the Day of Preparation, 14 *Nisan*, A.D. 26. If Christ's age, recorded by Luke as "about 30 years," is subtracted from A.D. 26, Christ's birth being 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 B.C. is supported. This text will show the length of Christ's ministry was not the three-and-a-half-year period generally taught today. A three-and-a-half-year ministry of Christ was impossible. This conclusion becomes very clear when considering the years that match a Wednesday Crucifixion, which will be considered shortly.

Some might assume the church always taught a three-and-a-half-year ministry of Christ. It did not. Just as Emperor Constantine, supported by Eusebius et al, moved the Church away from a Wednesday Crucifixion, so to Eusebius, no doubt supported by Constantine, was the force behind the Church embracing the belief Christ had a three-and-a-half-year ministry. Chronologist Edmund Sutcliffe wrote it this way:

> This theory [the three-year ministry theory] has scant and mostly doubtful support in the first three centuries. Origen can be quoted for it as well as for the one-year system. Eusebius is the

> first to give it prominence, and he supports it by arguments which are mostly clearly erroneous.[1]

The three-and-a-half-year ministry theory was an attempt by Eusebius to fit Christ's ministry into an errant understanding of the vision of the "weeks of years" in the book of Daniel 9:24-27.[2] Eusebius states:

> The whole period of our Savior's teaching and marvel-working is recorded to have been three years and a half, which is half of a week. This, I take it, John the Evangelist accurately establishes by his presentation in the gospel.[3]

Eusebius also writes:

> Therefore, it is written, "and in the midst of the week shall be taken away sacrifice and libations"; and it is clear that with the Passion was forcibly taken from them sacrifice and the libation, when according to the Evangelical Scripture "the veil of the Temple was rent from the top to the bottom."[4]

Eusebius' claims do not prove his position. His declaration that the Gospel of John taught a three-and-a-half-year ministry of Christ is incorrect. John makes no such claim, nor does his Gospel imply such a thing. Eusebius' position was unique and strange when compared to what the early church taught. Some early church fathers held a position of a one-year ministry of Christ and others a two-year ministry.[5] Yet due to his standing with Emperor Constantine, Eusebius' new teaching became dominant.

Unfortunately, the Church has carried forward this position even though it was arbitrary and incorrect. Today, the vast majority of preachers and scholars hold this position concerning the length of Christ's ministry on Earth attributable to Eusebius' audacious assertion.

In addition to Clement of Alexandria (born c. A.D. 150), discussed in chapter 1, here are some early church fathers who embraced a ministry of Christ that was two years and some months or shorter, including post-Resurrection encounters:

Valentinus (born c. A.D. 100), who was later declared a heretic, suggested a period of slightly more than two years and eight months.[6]

Tatian of Syria (A.D. 120-173) suggested a two-year ministry of Christ based upon his narration of Christ's work, the *Diatessaron*.[7]

Melito of Sardis (deceased c. A.D. 177), according to Sutcliffe, "held the two-year theory about the middle of the second century." Melito's writings refer to a "three year ministry" that in context would mean three whole or partial years.[8] This period does not equal the three-and-a-half-year ministry position of Eusebius.

Irenaeus (born c. A.D. 150) believed Christ ministered for two years, beginning and ending at Passover.[9]

Hippolytus of Rome (born c. A.D. 170) "nowhere speaks explicitly of a period of more than one year from the Baptism or beginning of our Lord's preaching up to His Passion."[10] This position indicates he had moved the start of the ministry of Christ forward from Irenaeus' dating by one year, as his younger friend Origen clearly did as documented in Origen's writings.

Origen (born A.D. 185) initially believed Christ's ministry was one year but altered his position to two to three years.[11] Origen early position was likely influenced by his older acquaintance, Hippolytus of Rome, before shifting to the two years and some months position common in this period.

Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea in Syria, (born c. A.D. 310) is recorded as stating the Apostle John taught Christ's ministry was completed in two years between three Passovers.[12]

Cyril of Alexandria (born c. A.D. 375) says, "In two whole years our Lord Jesus Christ traveled round the whole of Judea making use of His all-wise teachings and putting before them the divine and evangelic preaching."[13]

Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, (born c. A.D. 315) says the following:

> Again, they also accuse the holy evangelist [the Apostle John] - or rather, they accuse the Gospel itself - because, they say, "John said that the Savior kept two Passovers over a two-year period, but the other evangelists describe one Passover." The boors do not even know that the Gospels not only acknowledge two Passovers as I have shown repeatedly, but that they speak of two earlier Passovers, and of that other Passover as well, on which the Savior suffered, - so that there are three Passovers, from the time of Christ's baptism and first preaching, over three years until the cross.[14]

In other words, Epiphanius asserts **all** the Gospels teach Christ ministered during three Passovers including the one during which He died. To repeat the point, when Epiphanius and the others mentioned say three years, they do not mean four Passovers with three years inclusive. They were teaching that from the beginning of Christ's public ministry until his Crucifixion 14 *Nisan* of A.D. 28 He had two years of work sandwiched between three Passover seasons.

As was Jewish custom, certainly by the fourth century, a partial year was called a year, as mentioned earlier in this text.[15] Therefore, in that understanding, the short periods of private work with His disciples before the cleansing of the Temple and after the Resurrection could be added to the public ministry and it could be said He ministered for "three years." Yet in actual time, including His private work and the time between His Resurrection and Ascension, Christ ministered for only two years and a couple months.

Please also note, Epiphanius was standing against the teaching that Christ's ministry was **shorter** than three Passovers with two years inclusive between them. He does not even mention the belief Christ's ministry exceeded the short two years and a few months supported here. If a three-plus-year ministry taught by Eusebius was common in Epiphanius' day, he would have almost certainly addressed his opposition to it as well. His silence on this point strongly implies it was not generally taught in his day.

Recently, Kenneth Doig and others have presented Christ's ministry encompassed three Passovers and the two years sandwiched between them.[16] In their books, Adam Fahling (*The Life of Christ*, 1936), Edmund Sutcliffe (*A Two Year Public Ministry*, 1938), and Harold W. Hoehner (*Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 1977) present lists of authors from the 17th century to the 20th century who hold that Christ's ministry was two years, give or take a few months.[17]

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Additional Evidence for the Year of the Crucifixion

Christ's birth on 7 *Nisan*, 5 B.C. and the start of His two-year ministry being 1 *Nisan*, A.D. 26 point to a A.D. 28 Crucifixion, which is supported by Scripture and secular

sources. In A.D. 28, the day part of 14 *Nisan* was a Wednesday[18], being April 28th. After A.D. 28, 14 *Nisan* is not on a Wednesday again until A.D. 31. An A.D. 31 Crucifixion would mean Christ ministered for five years. Numerous historical facts and Scriptural statements must be discarded to accept an A.D. 31 Crucifixion.

Although the dating of the Crucifixion by the church fathers is not consistent, Clement of Alexandria taught Christ died in A.D. 28. He provided his date of the Crucifixion when he documented the Temple was destroyed 42 years and three months after Christ was crucified.[19] The Temple was destroyed in the Jewish calendar month of *Av* (July/August) A.D. 70.[20] By subtracting from the time of the Temple's destruction, one arrives at Passover season A.D. 28. For an extensive evaluation of dating found in Clement's *Stromata*, see appendix: "**Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas.**"

Stand for Truth, Even if it Has Been Forgotten by Most, Even if You Stand Alone

Just because something is a minority position does not make it incorrect. Some of the biggest advances historically were supported by the fewest individuals and met with the harshest opposition. Ignaz Semmelweis M.D. (1818-1865) discovered that hand washing after working with cadavers and before delivering babies saved lives. He was hated, mocked, and fired.[21] His work, which looked so novel, should have been the common practice if God's instructions regarding cleanliness had been remembered.

Likewise, most of what is presented in this book was known and forgotten. This book may appear revolutionary, but it is actually a restoration of what was already known.

Dating Information from a Fig Tree

And He entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve since it was already late.

And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany, He became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He answered and said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple.

And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?' But you have made it a robbers' den."
And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city. And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. And being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:11-22)

Christ's cursing of a fig tree during His last week of public ministry recorded in Matthew 21:18-22 and Mark 11:12-14 has information useful to this study. The fig is not ripe and sweet until June in Israel. The fruit appears months before it is ripe and is edible before it is sweet.

In ancient Israel, the poor were given or allowed to pick the unripened fruit for food.[22] Just as the crops at the corners of fields were left to the poor at harvest time, the unripened fig was available to them in the spring (Leviticus19:9-10; Leviticus 23:22).

A Mishnah within the Talmud says the figs of Bethany never completely ripened.[23] This pattern was not because the trees were different. Rather, it could have been because there were many poor people residing in the large city of Jerusalem only a short distance away. Any local poor, and the many travelers who walked through Bethany on the way to Jerusalem and counted themselves as poor helped themselves to the unripened figs. It is understandable these poor people consumed the figs before they were ripe.

Passover was too early for edible figs to be present on trees in most of the years suggested for Christ's Crucifixion. Due to the insertion of an intercalation month in A.D. 28, edible fruit would have been present on fig trees that year, though the figs would not yet have been sweet.[24]

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Lessons in a Fig Tree

Christ was using the fig tree as a metaphor of God's displeasure with Israel in Matthew 21:18-22 and Mark 11:12-14. The nation had foliage, but no good fruit. Some have foolishly suggested Christ simply did not know the tree's fruit was not in season yet. Even if He was not God, having been raised in Israel, He would have known about one of its main crops. He clearly demonstrates His knowledge of fig trees and their seasonal pattern in other sections of Scripture.

Matthew 24:32-33, Mark 13:28, and Luke 21:29-33 all record Jesus Christ saying that just as the leaves of the fig tree indicate the soon arrival of summer, certain signs will indicate the approach of the end times. Christ knew foliage and fruit appeared together on fig trees. He also knew the poor were given or allowed to pick and eat unripened figs. He was neither ill-informed nor a thief.

Luke 13:1-9 records Christ warning of a fig tree that had only one last season to produce fruit. The fig tree in the parable, likely given only months before the Crucifixion, represents Israel's short season of time to accept Christ before their rejection of Him would result in their judgment (Luke 19:42). This parable had been a warning to the religious leaders and the whole nation that it was at a crossroads.

Bethphage was next to Bethany, and both were very near the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:29). Bethphage meant "house of the unripe figs."[25] Christ was ascending from this area to Jerusalem when, according to Mark 11:11-12, He curses the fig tree. The town was obviously known for this foodstuff - but this tree had failed.

Through the unproductive fig tree, Christ was telling Israel they had also failed. It was too late; the nation was judged and condemned. It too would die. The fig tree's time of redemption had passed, so had Israel's. The illustration provided by the fig tree of Passion Week, in conjunction with the earlier parable about a fig tree, should have been a terrifying warning for those who were rejecting their Messiah.

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Chapter 18 Summary

A two-year public ministry of Jesus Christ is taught in Scripture and has been supported in the works of many church fathers from the first four centuries A.D. No church father or historical document before A.D. 325 suggests a ministry by Christ of three-and-a-half years.

Scripture records a Wednesday Crucifixion and provides information documenting Christ's public ministry being a little longer than two years. The cursing of the fig tree recorded in Scripture limits the years the Crucifixion could have occurred. The year Christ was crucified, A.D. 28, fits with this event. Clement of Alexandria records Christ was crucified in A.D. 28.

The date of the Crucifixion and the length of Christ's public ministry both support the dating of Christ's birth reintroduced by this book.

Section IV
Evidence of The Resurrection and Personal Thoughts

Evidence has been presented that Christ was born 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 B.C., that the length of His ministry was a few months more than two year, and that His Crucifixion was April 28th of A.D. 28. Attention will now be placed on Christ's victory over death through His Resurrection.

Historical and physical evidence of the Resurrection will be evaluated. Finally, in the closing remarks of this book, some fascinating divine timing related to the date of Christ's birth will be examined, followed by some personal thoughts.

Why the Information in this Section Is Important

It is vital to understand the Resurrection of Christ occurred and that the accounts contained in the Gospels blend together into one picture. The Gospel accounts do not conflict with each other. Rather, they complement each other.

There is proof of Christ's Resurrection through the testimony of Scripture, facts logically considered, and physical evidence. One particular piece of physical evidence to be examined proves His Resurrection providing continuing testimony of God's power, love, and mercy. The Resurrection of Christ is itself proof of His divinity.

Chapter 19
Historical Proof and Timing of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Historical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Day and Moment of Jesus' Resurrection

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The Historical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

There are numerous proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only three of the most powerful and irrefutable will be considered in this volume. The Shroud of Turin, which will be discussed in the next chapter and in an appendix, is one of these irrefutable proofs since to this day it cannot be replicated through science and technology. The image it portrays is also powerful, one of love, vulnerability, and peace through great pain.

Another proof of the Resurrection is the disciples' testimony. Judas' suicide after betraying Jesus suggests he believed in Christ's divinity and innocence, although he was not alive to hear of the Resurrection. All eleven remaining disciples endured incredible torture while retaining the testimony of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ten of them were even killed, because they declared, and would not deny, they personally saw Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Most people will deny what they know is true to stop their torture or execution. It is ludicrous to suggest anyone would maintain a lie when he knows simply recanting it will keep him from being boiled in oil, fed to lions, crucified, or meeting some other gruesome death, as the disciples suffered. People lie all the time to save their lives. They do not lie so they will be tortured and killed, except perhaps to save another's life.

A third proof of the Resurrection of Christ is even more powerful than the second. No one promulgates a lie, knowing their words would likely result in the people they most dearly love dying agonizing deaths. If the disciples lied, they did so to their own destruction while also dooming family, friends and followers to a similar fate. No one clings to a lie knowing it will result in an agonizing death for both them and those they love.

If one chooses to believe Christ's disciples all lied about seeing the resurrected Lord – still bearing the scars of His death - they have to believe the disciples intentionally subjected their loved ones to the possibility of horrible deaths because of their lie. Such a choice would be barbaric, sadistic, and insane.

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The Day and Moment of Jesus' Resurrection

It is commonly assumed Christ arose from the tomb as the sun was just cracking the eastern sky, only minutes before the women arrived at the tomb. However, none of the Gospels say Christ arose during the daylight period, the *hēmera*, of the first day of the week. Rather, imprecise English translations of the Greek texts have created several illusions which demand correction. These are:

> Mistranslating a Greek word that changes Matthew's narrative;
>
> Failing to distinguish the correct past participle tense;
>
> Failing to distinguish between two different Greek words that results in misunderstanding
> - precisely what occurred "on" the third day, and
> - precisely what happened "after" the third day;

Failing to translate into English the meaning of a Greek phrase that communicates "at the end of";

Misunderstanding exactly what Mark says repeatedly;

Believing Jesus was in the grave other than the three days and three nights He prophesied.

Mistranslating a Greek Word that Changes Matthew's Narrative

The mistranslation of a transitional word in Matthew 28:4 alters Matthew's narrative of chapter 28 so that the Roman guards who were watching the tomb can be understood to be laying on the ground in a state of shock as an angel has a conversation with the women who came to the tomb. This ridiculous description presents trained killers as cowards and women as socially oblivious. Neither of these suggestions is rational – soldiers would not be terrified as women were calm and women would not be so oblivious as to not be affected by frightened soldiers being nearby.

Matthew 28:4 is a flashback inserted within the narrative which explains what happened to the guards earlier, before the angel and the women spoke. Notice that Matthew 28:4 begins with SGW #575, ἀπὸ, pronounced "apo." This word means separation in time, place, or relation. Often rendered "from" or "away from," in this case related to the timing of events, it should be translated as "before." Thus, the verse is accurately translated here with an accompanying footnote from *Journal of Jesus the Messiah*:

> *Before then the fear of him caused those keeping watch to tremble and became as dead men.*[F115]

F115 Matthew 28:2-4 contains information which must have been provided by one of the guards at the tomb. Both Scripture and secular history record that many Roman soldiers became Christians. Since the guards were gone before the women arrived, it is certain the earthquake and the action of the angel to roll the stone away happened before the arrival of the women. Therefore, the women could not have been the source of this information concerning the angel.

None of the Gospels refer to any of the three-hour watch periods of the night as the identifier of when the Resurrection occurred. Nevertheless, for the soldiers to have been at the tomb to be frightened to the extent of being "like dead men," it means the stone was removed and the tomb was opened while they were there (Matthew 28:4). Then enough time elapsed for them to regain control of their senses and flee before the women arrived. Therefore, the Resurrection was obviously before sunrise the third morning when the duty of the guards was scheduled to end. The soldiers were gone, and Christ's body was raised, before daybreak Sunday morning.

Please realize, Christ did not need the stone rolled away to escape the confines of the grave. The stone was removed to permit the women and others inside the tomb. After the Resurrection, Christ was fully able to transport Himself instantly across distances (Luke 24:31), and through solid objects (John 20:19). Christ may have left the tomb, any time after dusk Saturday evening to fulfill His prophetic words. He could have done so with or without the stone being rolled away and with or without anyone seeing His movements.

Failing to Distinguish the Correct Past Participle Tense

The belief Christ arose with the dawn comes from imprecise translations of Mark 16:9. Here is an accurate

translation of the Greek text along with pertinent footnotes from *Journey of Jesus the Messiah*:

> *Now, having risen,[F123] early first of the week He became visible[F124] first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.*

F123 Mark 16:9 does not record the time at which Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene. Neither does the Greek text imply He began to speak to Mary immediately after He arose. The Greek text includes a form of SGW #450, Ἀναστὰς, pronounced, "Anastas," translated as "having risen." The root of this Greek word means "to stand up." This verse informs that His body had already been restored to life and that He was already mobile when their conversation occurred. A Resurrection after dusk Saturday night would have precisely fulfilled Jesus' prophecy. It would not have been necessary for Him to stay in the grave beyond that point.

F124 Mark 16:9 mentions the first of the week. The word translated "week" in this verse is "Sabbath" in the singular. The word "Sabbath" can either mean a particular day or it can represent a whole week, as it does here. Also notice that SGW #5316, ἐφάνη, pronounced "ephanē" is passive in form. Thus, "became visible" is more precise than "appeared" which is an active translation of the word.

Notice first, the tense of the Greek verb "to stand up" or "rise up" is in the **aorist participle** form. This word form means the act of "standing up" was – **having been accomplished**. Jesus did not rise early the first day of the week, He had already been active, perhaps for some time, by that point, "having risen."

Grievously, some English translations present a questionable choice "when" for the first word of Mark 16:9,

SGW #1161, δὲ, pronounced "de," then they attach it to an inaccurate **past** verb, "rose." These decisions state, or at least strongly imply, Christ was restored to life and became mobile early Sunday, just as Mary arrived at the tomb.

> *When (sic) Jesus rose (sic) from the dead [Sunday]…*

Some translations choose an appropriate translation choice within this verse for "de," "now" but unfortunately, they add "when," along with the incorrect past verb, "rose." This combination of words strongly reinforces an incorrect understanding.

> *Now when (sic) he rose (sic) early [Sunday]…*

Both these distortions errantly convey that Jesus' Resurrection happened at sunrise. Yet it occurred earlier. His body was neither restored to life nor did He first stand up at the moment of His encounter with Mary.

If one merely looks back a few verses within the same Gospel, it is clear Mark 16:9 records Christ was already up when the women arrived at the tomb. Mark 16:2 says, "…they came to the tomb when the sun had risen." The "they" in the verse is the women who arrive at, or just after, dawn in Mark's account. Upon their arrival they find the tomb already open and empty.

Failing to Distinguish between Two Different Greek Words that Results in Misunderstanding

Sometimes English readers of the New Testament have been thrown into confusion because two Greek words with different nuances of meaning are translated into the same English words. Thus, it appears Scripture teaches Jesus' Resurrection was both "on" and "after" the third day, which is impossible. Correctly translated, some verses

record He was raised to life by the Father "on the third day;" while other verses record He got up (stood up), after the start of third day."

Precisely what Occurred "On" the Third Day, SGW #1453

The Greek texts record that Jesus Christ was restored to life on the third day using the Dative case. This Greek structure adds "**on**" to the phrase "the third day. The following verses have the Dative case, adding "on" to the article(s), adjective, and noun translated, "the third day." These verses all include forms of SGW #1483 ἐγείρω, pronounced "eg-i'-ro" which means: "to bring to life" "to raise," "to awaken," or "to arouse."

> Matthew 16:*21 "**on** the third day" to be raised* (Aorist Infinitive Passive)
>
> Matthew 17:23 *"**on** the third day" He will be raised up* (Future Indicative Passive – Third person Singular)
>
> Matthew 20:*19 "**on** the third day" He will be raised up* (Future Indicative Passive – Third person Singular)
>
> Luke 9:22 *"**on** the third day" to be raised* (Aorist Infinitive Passive)
>
> I Corinthians 15:4 *He was raised* (Perfect Indicative Passive – Third person Singular) *"**on** the third day" according to the Scriptures*

In each of the 144 instances SGW #1453 is used in the New Testament a person or thing is acted upon to bring them to the place of life, consciousness, or a standing or active position – by another's action or command. There are only two possible exceptions.

One possible exception is John 13:4, which can be translated in the middle voice meaning He "having raised Himself up" to wash the disciples' feet. Although this verse, as well, seems best rendered in the passive voice: "He having been raised up" to wash the disciples' feet. This form implies Jesus' will was directed by the Father, as Scripture says concerning all Jesus' actions.

The only other time SGW #1453 is used where one could debate the action was self-directed is when SGW #1453 appears in the active voice in John 2:19. In this verse Jesus speaks of the raising of the Temple of His Body. Yet here also Jesus speaks as being an outside force (God, as He was in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit) restoring the life of the Son within the Body of Christ that would be killed. Jesus' Spirit having reentered His body directs it to get up. It is at that moment He fulfills the prophecy of John 2:19 that He will (in the active voice) "raise up this Temple." Here is an accurate translation of John 2:19:

> *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this Temple and* ***at the end of three days*** *I will raise it up."* (Raise is SGW #1453 Future Indicative Active First Person Singular)

The use of the Greek word that means to restore to life or consciousness should have been an indication to those listening that He was not speaking of a structure of wood and stones, but rather, His body.

The fact of the restoration of life within the Body of Christ, the action being done by God, and the point in time when it occurred at the very end of the third day is confirmed by these verses, Acts 10:40-41.

> *This One, God raised up* (SGW #1453 Aorist Indicative Active) ***at the end of the third day*** *and granted Him to become manifest. Not to all the*

people but to witnesses having been chosen beforehand by God – to us who ate and drank with Him after His standing again (SGW #450 Aorist Infinitive Active) *from out of the dead.*

(This verse introduces our next topic SGW #450 and a specific grammatical construct that is translated "at the end of" which will be discussed last in this chapter.)

Again, SGW #1453 is used in the New Testament to communicate **the movement from** a state of being without life or consciousness **to the condition of** being alive with consciousness. Scripture is consistent, Jesus was restored to consciousness life within His body by God, as Acts 5:30 says:

> *The God of our fathers raised* (SGW #1453) *Jesus, whom you disposed of, having hung upon a cross.*

Precisely what Happened "After" the Third Day, SGW #450

Unfortunately, English translations often translate SGW #450, ἀνίστημι, pronounced "an-is'-tay-mee" with the same words and implications as SGW #1453. These two words have different nuances of meaning. SGW #450 is used 108 times in the New Testament. It is never used to describe a person who is dead or unconscious being brought to life or consciousness.

The following verses also have the Dative case for the article(s), adjective, and noun translated, "the third day" meaning "on the third day." **However**, these verses have forms of the verb SGW #450, ἀνίστημι. This word comes from two words: the prefix "ana," meaning "up," "to," "anew," or "back;" and "histémi," meaning "to stand," "to set," or "to present" among others. Strong's includes that SGW #450 can be translated and understood in these

ways: “to raise up [establish],” “to rise [to stand up],” “lift up [bring to standing position or to a different place].”

Strong’s also says SGW #450 can be translated “to resurrect,” as it is used in other Greek writings. Yet when this word arguably can be translated “to resurrect” in the New Testament (John 6:39, John 6:44, John 6:54, Acts 2:32, and Acts 13:34) it would, in the position of this writer, be better rendered as “to raise up” as in each case the issue is not, or not only, the issue of being restored to life, but the lifting up or being exalted to a better place. This broader meaning in these verses is almost certainly why SGW #450 is used instead of SGW #1453.

In every instance where SGW #450 appears relating to Christ after His death it corresponds to a moment when He was conscious and doing something of His own volition. Whether one translates this word as a form of “arose,” “stood up,” “appear,” or “become visible” all should be understood to mean He was already restored to life in His body before that point.

Some might debate how Mark intended SGW #450 to be understood, whether it was a restoration to life/consciousness or the act of standing up, based upon its use in some verses (Mark 8:31, 9:9, 9:10, and 9:31). Mark’s understanding and word usage becomes clear when examining Mark 9:26-27. These verses present events after Jesus casts a demon out of a man, restoring that man, who is at least unconscious. Then the man by his own power (SGW #450 aorist indicative active) stands up. These verses are translated here:

> *And having cried out and having thrown him into great convulsions, it came out. And he became as if dead causing many to say that he was dead.*

And Jesus, having taken him by the hand, He roused (SGW #1453) *him; and he stood up* (SGW # 450).

Luke's writings also, as has already been presented through Acts 10:40-41, places SGW #1453 and SGW #450 in the same section, making clear the distinction between these words. Acts 12:7 provides another perfect example of SGW #1453 being used to describe restoring someone to life or consciousness and SGW #450 being used to describe a person getting up under their own power. Consider Acts 12:7:

And behold an angel of the Lord stood by and a light shone in the cell. Then, having struck the side of Peter, he awakened him (SGW #1453) *saying, "Get up* (SGW #450) *in haste!" And his chains fell off his hands.*

Failing to Translate into English the Meaning of a Greek Phrase that Communicates "at the end of"

God provided through His Word the information of the two parts of what happened in the resurrection through two distinct Greek words: the Body of Christ was restored to life (SGW #1453) and Jesus Christ got up (SGW #450). God's Word also identifies the very moment when the two-step process occurred: "at the end of the third day."

As shown, the specific moment Jesus was restored within His body is provided in John 2:19 and Acts 10:40. The specificity of John 2:19 and Acts 10:40 is provided through the use of a Greek grammatical construct. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance includes in its discussion of word #1722, "en" the fact that this word can represent the intermediate point between "eis – within" and "ek - out from." This meaning is communicated by the use of SGW #1722, "en" before the article "the" along with an adjective and a noun (or implied noun) in the Dative

case, relating to a period of time. Thus, the moment identified can be understood to be the tipping point between "within the three days" and "after the three days." Therefore, as reflected earlier, John 2:19 should be presented as "at the end of three days" and Acts 10:40 should be rendered as "at the end of the third day."

There are four additional times in the New Testament this construct appears. These verses are also best translated "at the end of."

> Luke 1:26 *Now at the end of the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God into the city of Galilee called Nazareth…* [to Mary].

"The sixth month" refers to the sixth month of the pregnancy of John the Baptist within Elizabeth. As has been presented in this work, this month was between June 26 and July 26 of 6 B.C. (assuming Elizabeth conceived on day 14 of her cycle). The timing of Jesus' birth points to His conception being the 9th of Av 6 B.C., which was on July 23/24 of that year.

> Luke 1:59 *And it came to pass at the end of the eighth day they came to circumcise the child and were calling him after the name of his father, Zechariah.*

This child was John the Baptist, whose name was corrected by his parents. This verse is the best proof that the grammatical construct must be translated "at the end of" and not "on." When God instituted circumcision for Jewish males, He instructed it to be done on boys who were eight full days old (Genesis 17:12), not during their eighth day. Abraham's compliance to this specific instruction can be seen in Genesis 21:4. Therefore, Luke 1:59 should not be understood or translated as "on the eighth day," but "at the end of the eighth day" which is correct. (If Jesus was born as 7 *Nisan* began and circumcised at the end of His eighth day, He would have

been cut at the same time as the lambs of the First Passover were cut in Egypt and during ancient times.)

> Luke 12:38 *And if at the end of the second watch and if at the end of the third watch He comes and finds them thus alert, blessed are those (ones).*

This verse is more impactful if, instead of "during" or "on," it is rather correctly translated that the Master returns and finds His servants alert "at the end of" these watches. Being alert at the beginning of a watch is normal; being alert at the end of a watch is not as common and more worthy of praise.

> Acts 2:17 *And it will be at the end of the last days, God says, I will pour out of My Spirit upon* ***all flesh*** *and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your older men will dream dreams.*

The disciples who spoke these words to those nearby at the day of Pentecost immediately following the Resurrection of Jesus Christ thought their day was near the end of the age. From God's perspective, they might have been correct. Yet it seems the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is still to come. For, indeed, at the Pentecost following Jesus' return, as described in *The Return of Jesus the Messiah* written by this author, when the tares, the damned, are removed from the Earth, at that time truly **all flesh** will have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them.

Misunderstanding Exactly What Mark Says Repeatedly

It is unfortunate that English translations do not always reflect the specific meaning of a SGW #3326, μετὰ, pronounced "meta." "*Meta"* when used in relation to time "denoting accomplishment" meaning following the point of

a completion; or sequentially "after." Often other words are added introducing confusion.

Mark used "*meta*" along with SGW #450 in three important instances. "*Meta*" appears with the verb SGW #450 in Mark 8:31 in the Aorist Infinitive Active form meaning "to stand up," "to appear again," or as presented often "to rise again."

> *And He began to teach them that it is necessary the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and to be put to death, and after three days to appear again.*

Then "*meta*" appears along with SGW #450 in Mark 9:31, and Mark 10:34 where the verb is in the Future Indicative **Middle** form meaning an action done affecting oneself. Thus, "will stand up," "will appear again," or as presented often "will rise again" by His own strength and affecting Himself.

> *For He was teach His disciples, and He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is delivered into hands of men and they will kill Him. And having been put to death, after three days He will appear again* (Mark 9:31).

And

> *And they will ridicule Him, and they will spit upon Him, and they will scourge Him, and they will kill Him. And after three days, He will appear again (Mark 10:34).*

With these verses Mark makes clear, that while Jesus was restored to life "on" the third day, it was by His own strength and will that He lifted Himself up and appeared again "after the third day."

Believing Jesus Was in the Grave other than the Three Days and Three Nights He Prophesied.

To explore the issue of timing further, if Christ did not rise as 17 *Nisan* ended Saturday at dusk and as 18 *Nisan* began, another issue is created. If during the time of Jesus' ministry a part of a unit of time equals its whole, as Jews now believe, and Jesus was not restored to life in His Body and had not lifted Himself up again there is a problem. A more accurate prophecy concerning His time in the grave would have been "three days and four nights," as a part of a fourth night would have been included, as any time after sunset would have been counted as another night. For those interested, here is the Jewish understanding of time recorded in the Talmud centuries after Christ's ministry on Earth. As stated by Rabbi Elazar ben Axaryah, "A day and a night are an *Onah* (Hebrew word for a unit of time), and the portion of an *Onah* is as the whole of it."[1]

Nevertheless, Christ's prophecy recorded in Matthew 12:40, says that He would be in the grave "three days and three nights." His words were very precise; the Greek New Testament is also very precise; and God fulfilled Jesus' prophecy very precisely. The New Testament provides the exact moment that fits every verse and description found in Scripture regarding the moment of the Resurrection. That moment is the point in time when 17 *Nisan* ended at dusk Saturday, just before 18 *Nisan* began.

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Chapter 19 Summary

God provided excellent proofs of the Resurrection. Among the evidence is the testimony of those who saw Jesus alive after His Crucifixion and burial. These witnesses would not deny their accounts even in the face of agonizing death. Their words not only forfeited their lives but destined many they loved to similar fates. No one would disseminate false information knowing it could produce such results.

Jesus was raised at the tipping point as 17 *Nisan* of A.D. 28 was ending as 18 *Nisan* began at dusk Saturday evening. His Resurrection precisely fulfilled His prophecy that He would be in the grave for a period of three days and three nights. His Resurrection was on May 1st of A.D. 28, before midnight concluded Saturday.

Chapter 20
Physical Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Physical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

A Photographic Negative Produced 1800 Years before Photography Was Invented

The Shroud of Turin Dated from Internal Evidence

The Sudarium of Oviedo – The Face-cloth of Christ

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And the two were running together; and the other disciple [John the Beloved] *ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.*

Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. (John 20:4-7)

The Physical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

There are at least two pieces of physical evidence to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first evidence is beyond human replication and is authentic beyond reasonable doubt. It is a photographic negative produced 1800 years before photography was invented. This testament is called the Shroud of Turin. The second physical evidence supports and is consistent with the Shroud, it is called the Sudarium of Oviedo.

Science supports that the Shroud of Turin is the burial cloth of Christ mentioned in Scripture as being placed

around His body. It was Jewish burial custom, for those with the means to afford it, that a long three-to four-foot-wide cloth be used to cover a body for burial. It would have been laid below the body from the feet under the back and over the head and then on top of the body from the head to the feet. It would then be bound together across the chest and knees with strips of material often cut from the side of the large cloth. Additionally, a sudarium (face-cloth) was used to cover the face of a person when it had been badly marred, as a gesture of respect until the shroud was ready to be pulled over the head. The face-cloth was removed as the shroud was pulled over the head.

Accepting the accuracy of the Catholic Church's records that support the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo as the face-cloth used on Christ, an important question arises: "When is the first dateable historical record of the existence of the Shroud and the Sudarium?" One of the two objects, the Shroud, has a defensible history dating very near the time of the Crucifixion. It is recorded to have been in the possession of King Abgar of Edessa in A.D. 30. As such, the Crucifixion of Christ must have occurred before that time. This information does not necessarily prove the dating of this text, but it does refute dating of the Crucifixion later than A.D. 30 even though such a belief is embraced by many contemporary theologians. The appendix: "**The Movement of the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium (face-cloth) of Christ**" has been included in this work. It briefly lists the travel of the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Christ from the tomb to the present.

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A Photographic Negative Produced 1800 Years before Photography Was Invented

Some have directed skepticism and scorn at the Shroud and those who believe it to be authentic. Yet less publicized brilliant scholarship has defended its authenticity. This honest research does not matter to those who do not want to believe it is authentic or have already made up their minds it is a fraud. Nevertheless, there is interesting dating evidence from the Shroud of Turin itself.

While there is so much more that can be said, this section of the book will be kept short by providing only a fraction of the compelling defense of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. Then its dating information will be examined.

Most compelling, as of the writing of this book, technology does not exist anywhere on the planet that can reproduce the Shroud of Turin. Although there is much evidence the Shroud of Turin was the burial cloth of Christ, this fact alone proves it was not produced as a fraud or by forgery at some point in the past. As Myra Adams of *National Review* quotes Dr. Alan and Mary Whanger as saying:

> ... the Shroud is totally unique. There is no other burial shroud, no other cloth of any description, no artistic production or style, that even remotely resembles it. STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project) scientists studying the materials and information gathered at the time of the 1978 exhibition have tested various means of image production, but none of them, singly or in combination, account for all of the characteristics of the images on the Shroud. Scheuermann and Bensen have produced very small images on cloth by electron corona discharge that do have characteristics of some of the images found on the Shroud. From their studies and ours, it seems clear that part of the

> images of the Shroud were formed by corona discharge from the release of an enormous amount of energy (100-200 million electron volts, something like a controlled lightning bolt) in a very short period of time, probably about one-tenth second. There also is clear evidence that at least one other type of radiation was involved in forming the images: x-radiation generated from within the body itself. So while we do not have the final and complete answer to the question of how the images were made, we do have compelling evidence that something took place that was truly extraordinary and so far unique.[1]

Dr. and Mrs. Whanger also say:

> Something extremely interesting can be seen by looking carefully at the mouth area of the three-dimensional photograph of the face (on the Shroud). In the center of the mouth, you can see the teeth with their roots extending both up and down. Just above the teeth to the left side of the mouth, and suddenly you will see the beard. Then follow the teeth to the right and there again you'll see the beard. This is evidence of both kinds of radiation: X-rays coming from the depth of the body (autoradiography) as shown by the images of the teeth, and corona discharge from the surface of the body as shown by the images of the mustache and beard.
>
> So we know that the images of the Shroud apparently were produced by at least two kinds of radiation... we know without any doubt that something extremely extraordinary took place. For one thing, dead bodies do not produce X-rays of themselves, or radiation as electron corona discharge. For another, earlier research by others has shown that all of the radiation is

> vertically collimated, that is, going straight up and down from the body. That is why the images are so perfectly detailed, but that does not happen in nature. Radiation, by its very nature, spreads in all directions. Autoradiographs that are made by injecting the body with radioactive dye are very, very fuzzy, not at all like the excellent quality autoradiographs that we see on the Shroud.[2]

The Shroud of Turin is a photographic negative produced by burns smaller than a human hair perfectly distributed to produce the image on the shroud without the use of pigment, a brush, or any other instrument in existence on the planet. It is the image of a man in the state of rigor mortis with wounds and markings entirely consistent with the Biblical description of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.[3] The image contains three-dimensional information.[4] To suggest the image on this piece of cloth was somehow made as a hoax 650 years ago calls into question, not the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, but the ability of the one making such an assertion to think rationally or to analyze information unaffected by biases. There is no other logical explanation except the cloth is the burial garment of Jesus Christ.

The Shroud of Turin Dated from Internal Evidence

One can thus argue: even if it is stipulated the Shroud of Turin is the burial cloth of Christ, how does it provide data on the timing of Christ's life and death? The shroud contains dating information because the cloth contains the three-dimensional image of two or more small round objects, coins, that had been placed over the eyes of the person buried in the shroud. Technology has made this fact discernable.

Here is an image of the face of Christ from the Shroud of Turin included through the generous permission of Mary

Whanger coming from the Whangers' book, *The Shroud of Turin: An Adventure of Discovery*. In this image, one can see the circular objects positioned over the eyes of Christ.

The three-dimensional information of the bulges over the eyes within the Shroud are clearly seen on a computer aided picture contained in "Reading the Shroud, Called the Fifth Gospel" by Giovanni Tamburelli.[5] Another computer aided image showing the three-dimensional information contained in the Shroud of Turin can be seen on Stephen E. Jones' blog "The Shroud of Turin: 2.6." The image in Jones' blog, also clearly shows the objects over the eyes of Christ.[6]

A closer examination of the area on the cloth where the small bumps occur reveals images that are discernable parts of local coins minted under Pontius Pilate whose reign began in A.D. 26. These images are not the result of chance. A mathematician asked to evaluate whether the bumps and marks in the cloth could have happened by random occurrence determined the probability was infinitesimal.[7] In addition to the Whangers' analysis, there is analysis by others which explains the image on the right eye.[8]

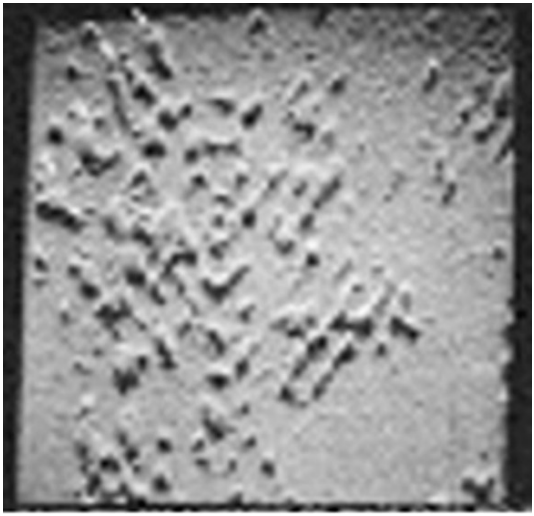
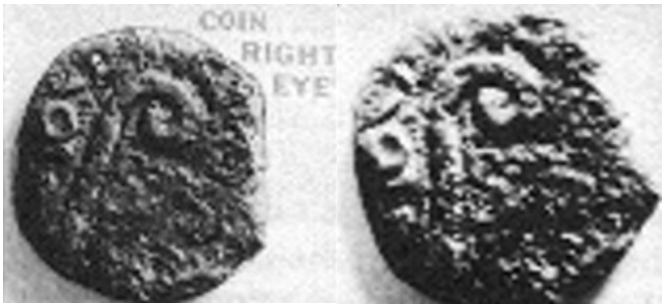


Image is a computer enhancement image of the area over the right eye of the Shroud of Turin (with tiny white arrows pointing to letters "UCAI")



Two images of coin owned by Fr. Francis L. Filas, which he and the Whangers believe to be a die mate of the coin used over the right eye of Christ at burial.

Coin images and Whanger quotes reproduced with the permission of Mary Whanger are from the book she and her husband wrote.

For clarity, some scholars quoted in this text refer to the coins burned into the Shroud of Turin over the eyes of Christ as *lepta* (the plural form of *lepton*). *Lepta* coins,

known in Scripture as the "widow's mite," were the lowest value coins available in the area.[9] The coins of Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4, which were written in Greek, use the Greek word *lepta*.

David Hendin, who wrote "Guide to Biblical Coins," refers to the same coins, which many believe covered the eyes of Christ, as *prutah,* (*prutot* or *prutoth* in the plural). Hendin's correct term *prutah* is used in this analysis and in the appendix, "**Of Titles and Coins**" except where the writing of others are being discussed.

The following testimony is from individuals who have studied the *prutot* images burned into the Shroud of Turin over the area of the eyes of Christ. The word usage or testimony of these scholars has not been altered. Based upon the evidence, their conclusion coins from Tiberius 16 were over Christ's eyes at burial and burned into the Shroud of Turin is justified.

In addition to computer technology and photographs, there is also supporting analysis of the coin images done through a procedure developed by the Whangers in the 1980s. This procedure is called the "polarized image overlay technique."[10] Using this technique, the image on the cloth can be aligned with information from coins and examined to see if they match. This procedure, while not without detractors, does provide an opportunity for analysis of the information on the cloth from photographs. The information on the cloth can be observed to match *prutah* coins, not just on recent pictures, but on pictures of the shroud taken in 1898 and in 1931.

While many researchers have agreed the objects on the cloth are the size and have the markings of *prutot*, opinions regarding which *prutot* were placed upon the eyes of Christ and what year they were minted is not so clear. The Whangers and a colleague, Professor Francis Filas, hold the *prutah* covering the right eye was minted in Tiberius 16 with an astrologer's staff called a *lituus*

bending to the right.[11] Tiberius 16 was A.D. 26/27 - using regnal nonaccession-year dating and the Hebrew or Macedonian calendar system used in Israel and the Syrian Province. This coin was also minted in Tiberius 17 and 18. (The year in that region began near the fall equinox. This dating is discussed in detail in the appendix, "**Of Titles and Coins**.")

The examination of the *prutah* (or) *prutot* on the left eye is less clear. Filas and the Whangers see the obverse side (front or "head") of a *joulia prutah* (Hendin 648), distinguished by three bound ears of barley, which was minted in Tiberius 16, centered over the eye socket.[12]

Alternately, in 1996 Professors Pierluigi Baima-Bollone and Nello Balossino of the University of Turin came to a different conclusion. By studying a three-dimensional enhancement of the shroud, Baima-Bollone and Balossino report the existence of one *joulia prutah* coin. They recognized its presence over the left eye, but lower on the eye socket. The reverse side (back or "tail") of the *joulia prutah* coin with its date "LIC" equaling Tiberius 16 is discernable. These letters are in this case Greek letters representing numbers. "L" stand for "*Lamda*" which means year. "I" stands for "*Iota*" which means 10. "C" stands for "*Vau*" which is also called "*Digamma*" and is now obsolete. This letter meant six in the ancient Greek alphabet.[13] Thus, the letters mean "year 16."

Stephen E. Jones allows both these teams of scholars might be correct.[14] This conclusion implies the eyelid may have required the weight of two coins to hold it closed. The partially covered underlying coin appears lower on the eye socket and was the reverse (back side) revealing the "year 16." Two coins would also account for the larger bump in the cloth some have suggested might be the result of a blood clot.[15] Jones' suggestion is both appealing and plausible.

From a chronologist's perspective, any of the three options concerning the object(s) covering the left eye present the same date, Tiberius 16, as according to the Whangers' information, the *joulia prutah* was minted for only six months during Tiberius 16.[16]

Please note, since 1996 the commonly accepted terminology for the *joulia prutah* has changed so the "reverse" is now the "obverse" and what was "obverse" is now identified as "reverse."

The easy solution for this book is to ignore the coins and their possible interpretation. Nevertheless, the coins are present on the image on the shroud and academic integrity demands the inclusion of the analysis of the previous scholars in this work. The fact is, if the images are the coins these researchers propose and they have the date Tiberius 16, and **if Tiberius 16** is during A.D. 29/30 as supported by numismatists, the dating of this text is incorrect. However, Tiberius 16 is not A.D. 29 or 29/30. Numismatists have embraced that period because contemporary historians have generally disregarded Tiberius' co-regency. The *prutah* coins produced in Israel, as well as other Roman coins, recognize Tiberius' reign as beginning when he served alongside Augustus.

It is not surprising *prutot* minted in the Syrian province would recognize the two years of the co-regency as the first two years of Tiberius' reign. It was by Augustus' request and Senate law the Roman Provinces were under the direct authority of Tiberius during his co-regency. With this correction, the coins point to the period of their minting during A.D. 26/27. Again, one of the two coins, known as a *joulia* since it is **believed** it was minted in honor of Tiberius' mother **after her death**, was struck for only six months of Tiberius 16.[17] Clearly, the *joulia* was minted to honor the co-empress with Tiberius, his mother Julia/Livia. Yet this coin was **absolutely not minted after her death**. The appendices in this book: "**The Dating of Tiberius' Co-Regency**" and "**Of Titles and**

Coins" prove the *joulia* was minted before Julia/Livia's death. Tiberius 16 is during A.D. 26/27.

For those wishing to study further details regarding the *prutah* coins on the Shroud of Turin, Dr. Whanger's response to an article by William Meacham is worth reading. Included in his response is an image of the coin over the right eye using the Whangers' polarized image overlay technique. To examine the photograph, one can access William Meacham's article, "The Authentication of the Turin Shroud: An Issue in Archaeological Epistemology" found in "Current Anthropology," Volume 24. No. 3 (June 1983), pages 283-311. Dr. Whanger's response to Meacham can be found on pages 304-305.

There is one thing certain about the coins. The man buried in the Shroud of Turin, died with His eyes open. Many cultures, as well as occasionally the Jews, covered eyes with coins in burial so as to hold the lids closed.[18] Some have questioned whether Jews employed this practice. Yet there is corroborative evidence. Three Jewish skulls, two of which were found in a Jewish cemetery, contain two local coins in each skull. Based upon the date of the coins, one of the skulls was buried within a few decades before Christ's death and the coins in the other two skulls can be dated to a few decades after the Crucifixion of Christ.[19]

While the eyes being open at death and the coin images being on the cloth seems certain, there are three logical conclusions that can be drawn from the images' presence:

1) If Christ was crucified on the Day of Preparation for Passover, Wednesday, April 28, A.D. 28 (14 *Nisan*), and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Him that afternoon, then these recently minted local coins would likely have been in their pocket or money purse.
2) The Holy Spirit directed the men's action

without their knowledge or conscious minds even knowing what they were doing.

3) And most likely, the men who buried Christ were led by the Holy Spirit or their own wisdom to decide to place recent coins on Jesus Christ's eyes. They could have done this placement to mark the date of the event. Custom in Israel at this time was to allow decomposition of the body for one year and then to place the remaining bones within an ossuary.[20] As discussed, although rare, coins have been found within the skulls of decomposed Jewish remains found within ossuaries.[21] Depending on the size of the coin and the eye socket opening, the coins would have either fallen inside the skull, or would remain on the socket.[22] Using the small *prutot* would have assured the coins would have fallen inside the skull providing a permanent date testimonial.

This analysis makes one assumption. The coins only mark the point after which the burial could have occurred. It is possible to bury someone today with the same coins over their eyes. The only thing the coins prove is the burial could not have occurred before their minting in Tiberius 16, which according to Luke 3:1 was the year after the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist.

There is one other thing to note about the burial cloth. John 20:8, records, John looked in the tomb, saw, and believed. The only thing in the tomb to see were the burial cloths. Why believe as a result of seeing burial cloths ripped open or untied and left behind? Once the Roman soldiers were gone, any grave robber with the help of several strong friends could have removed the stone, ripped open or untied a burial cloth, and taken the body. Why would looking at a burial cloth cause John the Beloved to believe? It seems both clear and logical, he

believed because the burial cloth was left intact still tied shut with no body inside. After the Resurrection, Christ could and did pass through matter: a burial cloth, sealed rooms, or anything.

***

The Sudarium of Oviedo – The Face-Cloth of Christ

As mentioned, first-century Jewish burial custom provided that when the face of the person to be buried was marred it was to be covered by a sudarium or face-cloth to show respect for the dead as their body was prepared for burial. A face-cloth was to be wrapped from under the head over the side of the face and back under the head completing two circles so the face was covered with two layers.[23] After preparations were complete, the face-cloth would be removed before tying shut the shroud or burial cloth. It would then be neatly folded or rolled up and placed near the body since at that point it had touched the deceased and if it had absorbed any material from the body would have been regarded as part of the body. Jewish culture retains this understanding.

The Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo share much in common. These facts are condensed from Janice Bennett's Sacred Blood Sacred Image. Both the Shroud and the Sudarium:

> Absorbed blood of a human male - type AB,
>
> Have blood stains that correspond perfectly in their placement upon the cloths,
>
> Reflect the same natural features of the man (e.g. nose size and shape),
>
> Show the same distortions through injury (e.g. swelling on the right check),

> Have stains matching the injuries described in Scripture (scourging, crucifixion, and the crown of thorns), and
>
> Contain residue of dirt and ointments consistent with each other and the Biblical description of events.[24]

The Sudarium also provides other information independent of the Shroud. Research by the Investigative Team of the Spanish Center of Sindonology (EDICES), showed the blood stains on the Sudarium did not come from the Shroud of Turin, nor did the Sudarium remain on the face of Jesus underneath the Shroud.[25] Additionally, according to EDICES,

> …the cloth was wrapped around the head of a crucifixion victim while he was still on the cross, was re-wrapped after he had been placed in a horizontal position, remained in place while he was transported to a nearby location, and was then removed and placed aside.[26]

Just as the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium seems to be proved authentic beyond reasonable doubt. Unfortunately, it does not seem the Sudarium can provide year specific dating information regarding the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Yet it does support the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin that does provide such information.

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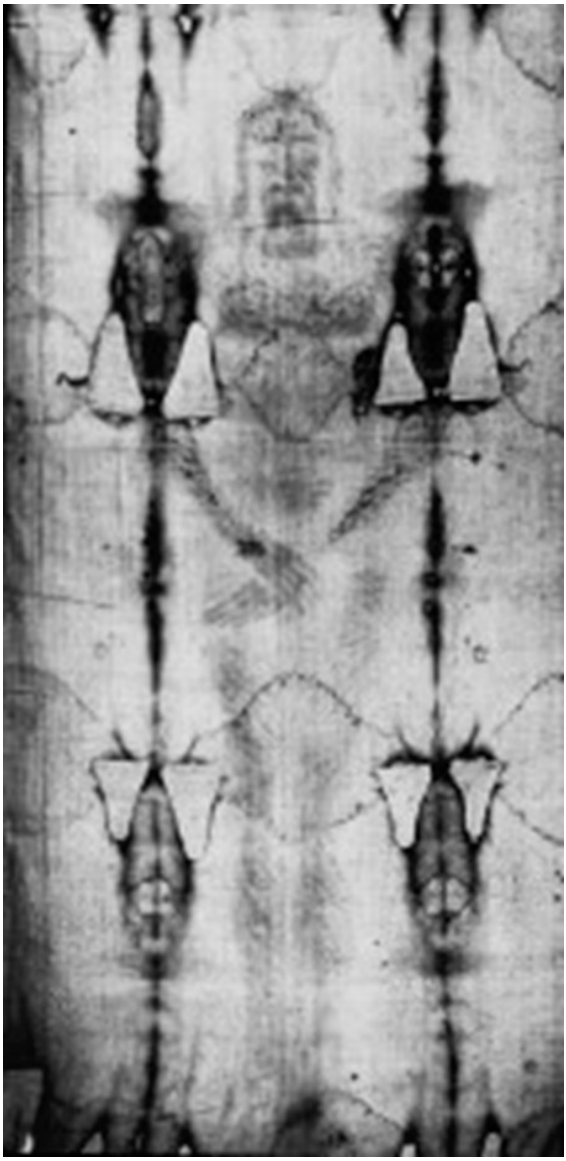

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Chapter 20 Summary

There are two pieces of physical evidence to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The burial cloth of Jesus, the Shroud of Turin, that is impossible to replicate. Only during the last century has technology developed enough to be aware of the level of detail contained on the Shroud. Therefore, it cannot be a forgery produced in the Middle Ages as has been laughably suggested.

The Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium (face-cloth) are almost certainly from the same individual. The traceable history of the Shroud of Turin provides reasonable explanation as to where this image-containing cloth was from A.D. 30 forward. Along with the image of a man, the Shroud appears to have images of coins burned into the cloth. The images of the coins are of *prutot* that were minted in Israel during Tiberius' 16th year of reign in A.D 26/27.

Since Luke says John the Baptist and Christ began their respective ministries during Tiberius' 15th year of reign, these coins would have been produced only several months before the Crucifixion and would have been readily available for Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to use to hold shut the eyelids of Christ for burial.

Evaluating The Dating and Their Theological Implications

The birth date of Jesus Christ, 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 B.C., is not just benign information. The date ties to other events. Both the birth date and the other events have theological meanings. The following is a list and summary for consideration followed by this writer's conclusions regarding the information in this book.

1) 7 *Nisan* is the seventh day of the religious New Year. Seven is the number associated with God and has been called the "perfect" number. It is perhaps a reason Christ was born on this date, but there are many messages to decipher in the date.

   7 *Nisan* was the date of spiritual new beginnings. Exodus 40 – Leviticus 8 records God's providing a series of instructions to Moses about procedures, apparently on the same occasion on the same date, 1 *Nisan*. Exodus 40:1-2, 17 says God ordered the construction of the Tabernacle on, the first day of the first month, and it was erected on that date.

   Then beginning in Leviticus 1 God gives a series of instructions regarding how worship was to be conducted through sacrifices, which Moses was then to pass along to the children of Isreal. These instructions being completed, Moses, apparently on the same date, starts the process of consecrating Aaron and his sons to be priests before God and the people, Leviticus 8:3.

   At God's instruction, Moses then consecrates the altar, Leviticus 8:14-15. The completion of the consecration was accomplished as Aaron and his sons were set apart for service. They were commanded to stay at the doorway of the tent of meeting seven days, ending on 7 *Nisan*. Their service then began on 8 *Nisan*.

The process of consecrating the place of worship in the millennial kingdom will reinstitute a similar procedure of consecration between 1 *Nisan* and 7 *Nisan* each year, Ezekiel 45:18-20.

2) 7 *Nisan* was the day Moses' successor, Joshua, commanded the people to, "Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it" (Joshua 1:10-11). The preparation for mankind to enter the promised land of heaven is the body God the Father prepared for Christ which was to be the payment for redemption. Scripture says, "a body you have prepared for Me." (Hebrews 10:4-7).

3) 7 *Nisan* was the day before the start of the week-long period of purification from the defilement of death. For one to participate in the Passover meal they had to recognize their need, decide to accept God's redemption plan, and put themselves in position for purification to begin the next day. His sacrificial death is the process God has established to purify from sin and redeem from the condemnation of death. The process of the week of purification foretells God's work of redemption through Christ. Human's recognition of their need of a Savior is the first step in receiving God's redemption.

4) The completion of the eight full days until circumcision means Jesus was likely cut in circumcision the evening of 15 *Nisan*, very likely at the very time specified for the lambs of Passover to be cut in sacrifice. The Lamb of God cut as the lambs of Passover were cut.

5) At the time of circumcision, baby boys officially received their name. Because this happened on 15 *Nisan*, the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast

of Unleavened Bread, three things with sacred meanings coincide: separation from leaven, the act of Christ's circumcision, and Christ receiving the name "Yeshua."

Separation from Leaven

6) Leaven generally represented sin in Scripture and Jewish culture. Thus, unleavened bread was bread without this representation of "sin" and was used for sacred purposes. Christ referred to Himself as the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35). Further, at the Last Supper Christ lifted up the unleavened bread at the meal and said the bread represented His body which was to be broken for mankind (Luke 22:19). Christ is the "Unleavened Bread of Life." He is the sinless Savior. To evaluate proof of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, please read the appendix: "**Sinless Savior, the Unleavened Bread of Life**."

Circumcision

7) Circumcision was a mark God required on the body of Abraham and his sons signifying their separation as a people dedicated to God. After receiving God's "Unleavened Bread" to redeem from sin's condemnation, believers are to recognize and be diligent to fulfill their call to be separated from sin avoiding its contamination. New Testament believers whether natural children of Abraham, or grafted-in sons and daughters (Romans 11:17, Galatians 3:29), are called to be set apart from the world for God's purposes as His children, just as the Jews were under the Old Covenant.

"Yeshua" - "the Lord Saves"

8) As His name represents, Christ is the One who has saved believers from judgement due to sin. He accepts believers as those given to Him by the Father (John 6:37) set apart from out of the world (Romans 6:1-23). He is also the one who continues

to save from the power of sin.

Again, because Christ was born on 7 *Nisan* three powerful symbols and messages come together on 15 *Nisan*: who He was – the "Unleavened Bread of Life", His being set apart for God's divine purpose, and His name identifying Him as the Savior.

6) The date of Christ's conception should be considered. If one counts 7 *Nisan* and then back in time 265 more days, the perfect gestation cycle for a human, the date reached is 9 *Av*, 6 B.C. 9 *Av*, or 10 *Av* if the 9th is a Sabbath, is the date assigned by the Jews for an annual fast because it is the anniversary of the destruction of **both** the first Temple and the second Temple.[1] God created the Temple of a Body for His Presence on the anniversary of the destruction of the earlier Temples. Jesus referred to Himself as a Temple when He said, "If you destroy this Temple, I will raise it up in three days." (John 2:19-21). His words carried a hidden message pointing to the day of His miraculous conception!

7) 16 *Nisan* is the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the first fruits were presented. The regulations pertaining to the "First Fruits" offerings described in Leviticus 23:9-12 adds another layer of meaning to the 7 Nisan birth of Christ. Here is this section of Scripture:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the First Fruits of your harvest to the priest.

And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the

Sabbath [High Sabbath of the first Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] *the priest shall wave it.*

Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb <u>one-year-old</u> without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-12) (underlining added)

The Church has long accepted Christ was the Passover Lamb slain to provide salvation. It is a powerful testimony that Christ's Crucifixion fulfills the requirement for a perfect Lamb of God as He was slain when Passover lambs were killed for the majority of the Jews (Mark 15:34).[2] However, the realization Christ also represented the perfect male lamb sacrificed during the First Fruits was lost to the Church when the 7 *Nisan*, April 13, 5 BC, date of Christ's birth was lost. It is hereby rediscovered.

Generally, the Jewish 354-day lunar calendar year is 11 days off from the 365 ¼ day solar year of the Julian (or current Gregorian) calendars. Therefore, the usual nine days between 7 *Nisan* and 16 *Nisan* would not allow Christ's birth to match the First Fruits celebration. However, the lunar cycle affecting the start of 5 B.C. and 4 B.C. shortened the difference between the lunar calendar of 5 B.C. and the solar calendar. This fact meant April 13 of 4 B.C. was nine days later than the lunar calendar instead of the normal 11-day difference from the solar year.

For those who regard the solar year, the nine days allowed Jesus' birth to match the symbolism of the one-year-old lamb for the celebration of First Fruits of 4 B.C. This matching is because He was exactly one solar year old on 16 *Nisan* of 4 B.C., the day of First Fruits, as it was April 13th on that date. Therefore, Christ perfectly fulfilled the timing

instructions for the sacrificed male lamb for the First Fruits ceremony.

For those who regard Jewish lunar year, Christ's sacrifice does not match the First Fruits sacrifice in 4 B.C. since, by the Jewish calendar, He was more than one year old. However, Historian Alfred Edersheim records a crucial piece of information regarding the age of the lamb for the First Fruits sacrifice per Jewish law and custom. He says the lamb, "must be free from all blemish, and neither less than eight days, nor more than exactly one year, old."[3] Since Christ was born on 7 *Nisan*, 5 B.C., on 16 *Nisan* of 5 B.C. He would have been more than 8 days old. According to the Jewish calendar and their regulations He would have been just old enough to represent the perfect lamb for the ceremony of First Fruits of 5 B.C.

8) Not only was Christ the perfect representation of the Lamb of First Fruits. At His death He fulfilled the rest of the First Fruits requirements, proving the timing of His birth in relation to First Fruits was divine planning.

God's people were also to bring the first of their wheat harvest as a demonstration of their recognition that it was God who provided for their life. Specifically for First Fruits they brought two, one-tenth ephahs of fine flour mixed with oil; this amount was twice as much as required for other offerings. Jesus was represented by this double-wheat offering as it reflected the dual nature of Christ. Jesus was a two-in-one sacrifice: fully God and fully human.

Jesus was not only represented by the **first** of the wheat harvest. He was the **Last** of the Wheat provided for those humble enough to receive Him. The following is footnote "F84" from *Journey of*

Jesus the Messiah, written by this author:

> Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 include the quotation of a Hebrew word from Psalm 22:1, SHW #5800, עֲזַבְתָּנִי, pronounced "'ă-zaḇ-tā-nî (sabacthani)." This word is translated a variety of ways in the Old Testament, including the concepts of "forsake," or "abandon." English translations present these concepts both in their translation of Psalm 22:1 and their translation of Jesus' words in these New Testament verses. It is wrongly assumed Jesus was abandoned by the Father, as translating the word as "forsaken" teaches in these instances.
>
> Further, some have suggested the Father had to turn His face away from sin or from seeing One He loved so much suffering from the results of sin. This understanding is absurd and the opposite of the truth. If God had to turn His face from sin, or from seeing those He loved suffering as the result of sin, He would have to avert His eyes from the entire human condition. Rather, SHW #5800, "https://biblehub.com/hebrew/azavtani_5800.htmsabacthani" carries the meaning of something of value intentionally left to remain for a time to benefit those humble enough to acknowledge their desperate need. This meaning is reflected in the last grapes left in a vineyard, Leviticus 19:10, or the grain left on the edges of a field, Leviticus 23:22. This understanding of SHW #5800, both for Psalm 22:1 and these verses in the Gospels, is not only suitable, but in fact conveys the meaning of the event perfectly. Jesus' word seems therefore most accurately translated as "left Me behind."

Jesus' prayer had a two-fold purpose. Primarily it was to communicate to the Father: "hasn't this gone on long enough?" Note that after just a few moments, obviously with the Father's consent, Jesus ended His human suffering. Yet His words also communicated to mankind. They should have been understood by the religious leaders as a declaration that His suffering was the fulfillment of Psalm 22 which vividly predicted Messiah's sufferings on the cross. Additionally, a discerning Jew would have seen the specific fulfillment of Psalm 22:1 as a perfect wrap-up to the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God's provision left in plain view for the humble and destitute to receive what they needed for life. He was God's final provision for people, like the grain on the edge of the field and the grapes left on the vine.

9) The last part of the sacrifice the people were to bring for First Fruits was wine to be poured out. Jesus said His blood was to be poured out. This wine of First Fruits was a representation of His blood poured out by a weapon while His body was on the cross.

10) The birth date of Jesus Christ not only reflects back to the message of God contained in the Old Testament. His birth date, both by the Hebrew lunar calendar, 7 *Nisan*, and the solar calendar date of April 13th figure prominently in the dates which match subsets of time which seem to layout the dating of the return of Jesus Christ. These subsets of time and a possible match to the seven-year tribulation period are examined in *Return of Jesus the Messiah*, also written by this author.

This list and summary demands that conclusions be drawn. Here is a list of this author's conclusions submitted for consideration.

The date of the dedication of the First Temple and the date of the initiation of the courses of the priests **has been proven**;

The probable conception and birth dates of John the Baptist **has been identified**;

Convincing evidence has been offered that Christ was conceived as a man, a native to the world, on 9 *Av*, 6.B.C. as a testimony to Jesus Christ's brethren, the Jews. His body being the perfect "Temple of God" on Earth.

It has been proven Jesus Christ was born 7 *Nisan*, the day of spiritual new beginnings, and

Convincing evidence has been offered that His birth was between dusk and midnight April 13, 5 B.C.;

It has been proven Christ was circumcised on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as God's perfect Unleavened Bread of Life on 15 *Nisan*, April 22, 5 B.C.;

It has been proven Christ was old enough (eight-and-a-half days) to satisfy the Jewish law to match the symbolism of the lamb of the First Fruits celebration on the morning of 16 *Nisan* of 5 B.C.;

It has been proven Christ was exactly one year old 16 *Nisan*, April 13, 4 B.C. qualifying Him as fulfilling the symbolize of the lamb of the First Fruits celebration by the solar calendar;

It has been proven Christ can be considered the fulfillment of the wheat and wine of the offerings of First Fruits;

It has been proven Christ fulfilled the Daniel 9 "Messiah Prophesy" as He began His ministry 1 *Nisan*, April 7, A.D. 26;

It has been proven Christ was crucified on Wednesday, 14 *Nisan*, April 28, A.D. 28, and

Evidence has been presented that Christ arose from the dead as dusk completed 17 *Nisan* and began 18 *Nisan*. The Julian date of His Resurrection being May 1st, A.D. 28;

It has been proven, on the Sunday morning of May 2, A.D. 28 the women found an empty grave where Christ had been buried;

Although not examined in this book, **this writer is convinced** Christ will come during a seven-year period wherein His Hebrew and Solar calendar birth dates play prominent roles.

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Personal Thoughts

I have been in awe and wonder as I studied for and prepared this book. It is as though the Lord has honored me with the joy of knowing some of His thoughts. One such example was in the case of a conversation Christ had with the religious leaders. The religious leaders were scorning Jesus Christ because He healed a man on the Sabbath. He could have given any number of defenses for what He had done. But He choose to defend His action by making this point, knowing it would be recorded in Scripture: "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?" (John 7:23).

Christ said this and got no objections from the religious leaders. As always, His words were selected to make a point then and for the sake of believers for all time. Because of His statement being made, being unchallenged, and the conversation being entered into the Scriptural record there should never be any confusion. Circumcision was legally correct to do and occurred on Sabbath days to obey the mandate for circumcision after the eighth day (Genesis 17:12). Christ was born 7 *Nisan* and as shown, He was circumcised 15 *Nisan*. Therefore, Christ was describing His own circumstance.

I smile and laugh as I picture the Lord's amusement as He made His statement about circumcision and saw John jot down what He said. I wonder if any of the people hearing understood all He was saying. I do not know if they understood, but I am convinced He could look down through history from that moment and see my hands start to shake and my heart race as I realized His wonder and brilliance in His hidden message. I see Him smile knowing the great joy it gave me, just as He sees you now. Please rejoice with me in the beauty of His brilliantly precise plan recorded in His word! Isn't He wonderful!

As I studied Jewish and gentile scholars throughout the ages and wrote this book, I believe God led my path. I have often been awestruck as I worked on this project, but I have also felt troubled. Why did God choose me for this project? There are many people smarter and more educated than I. There are certainly many people more righteous than I am. Why me? Scripture says, "But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands." (Exodus 20:6, New Living Translation). I have Jewish blood from both my father's parents. Both my grandfather and grandmother descended from Rabbis. I remember my grandmother explaining to me as a boy the family's Russian last name could mean we were descendants of the tribe of Levi. I have wondered, did one of my ancestors do something so wonderful God honored them by allotting me this

privilege? Yet with so many ancestors alive in Israel during Christ's ministry isn't it just as likely I had one or more who cried out, "Crucify Him!" I do not know if either of these notions have a place in reality, but one thing I do know without the slightest doubt, my sins were part of the reason my Lord was nailed to a cross! But for His grace, I deserve His judgment not His blessing.

We all stand as sinners before a Holy God. We are hopeless without His grace, but we are embraced by Him because of it. His grace, and our faith in Christ that allows us to receive it, are the keys. This reality brings us back to the illustration that started this book.

If you remember, I likened solving the puzzle of the timing of Christ's birth, death, and Resurrection to opening a bank vault. At this point, I believe we have spun the dials to the correct points and the vault can be opened. There is so much in store for anyone who opens the door and believes Jesus is the Christ who died to pay for our sins and receives Him as Savior and Lord. For if we trust in Him allowing Him to be the Lord of our lives, He promises to forgive our sins and to accept us as His redeemed.

Nevertheless, the vault door is not open yet. If all the tumblers line up, the door is still closed until the large bar handle is swung to the open position, releasing the door and someone pulls it open toward them. This large bar handle is now in your hand. It is the handle of faith. Do you believe? Will you swing the bar handle to the open position and pull the door to yourself? Don't walk away from the treasures that are yours just inside the vault. Open it by asking Jesus Christ to forgive your sins, come into your heart, and be your Savior and Lord.

*****

God Still Works in Mysterious Ways – example 1

My favorite musical work is by far Handel's *Messiah.* Every year my parents played it after our Christmas Eve family advent devotional or church's Christmas Eve service. Handel's *Messiah* is the perfect Christmas music. Virtually every word of the piece is either Old Testament prophesy about the Messiah or New Testament verses telling the story of His birth and celebrating His Kingdom.

Perhaps miraculously, Handel composed the *Messiah* in less than 4 weeks.[4] Its first performance was in Musick Hall in Dublin on April 13, 1742.[5] If you agree April 13 is Christ's date of earthly birth, then you have a question to answer. Did God arrange for the consummate piece of music celebrating the birth of Christ in the English language to be performed on His Son's birthday? Or was it just a coincidence? The way one looks at the world and whether they believe in the hand of Divine Providence may determine the answer to that question.

God Still Works in Mysterious Ways – example 2

Lest one think God has ceased to have a sense of humor or an interest in timing and circumstance, here is another "coincidence." I have great admiration for those who have explored the chronology of Christ through the centuries. Among the first in western civilization to pursue this mystery was Sir Isaac Newton. In my endeavors I have been immensely helped by the staff of the Grove City, Pennsylvania public library. One of those most helpful and gracious was Sean R. Newton. Sean has been told by his family he is a descendant of the family of Sir Isaac Newton.

Was it a fluke a descendant of the family of one of the first men committed to the search for Christ's true birth date in western civilization aided in the conclusion of the journey to rediscover this date? I think not! God is still the master of time and circumstance. He weaves the choices of mankind into his fore-ordained master plan. May you enjoy the peace of knowing it is God's desire to draw you to Himself and bless your life with many good things.

> *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.* (James 1:17)

Appendix Section
Sacred History

Last Day of Christ's Life before Crucifixion
(Hourly breakdowns of 14 *Nisan* are approximations)

	6-9 p.m.	9 p.m. – midnight	midnight - 3 a.m.	3-6 a.m.
hour one	preparations for the Last Supper by the disciples	spends an hour in prayer	"trial" continues	beaten by the guards under the command of the priests
hour two	Last Supper, Jesus washes feet and warns Peter he will deny Him	arrested and taken for trial at the home of Annas	Jesus is declared guilty of blasphemy for affirming He was the Son of God	presented to Pontius Pilate by daybreak - sent to Herod Antipas and returned to Pilate
hour three	leads disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane	beginning of "trial" by selected members of the Sanhedrin	rooster crows (still same day Pharisaic time used by Mt. 26:34, Mk. 14:30, Lk. 22:61) *	Roman scourging and Pilate's presentation to the Jews "behold your King"

* The rooster crowed on the next day by Roman timing used by John in his Gospel as recorded in John 3:38. Thus, John does not say it is the same day.

6-9 a.m.	9 a.m. -noon	noon - 3 p.m.	3-6 p.m.
condemned to crucifixion	on	darkness	Christ dies at around 3 p.m.
driven up to Calvary receiving additional lashes on His calves	the	covers	Joseph of Arimathea gets permission to take the body of Christ for burial
nailed to the Cross by 9 a.m.	Cross	the land	Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bury Christ before dusk and the start of Passover/ Feast

Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas

Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata, 1, 21* contains Clement's assertion regarding the birth date of Jesus Christ. As stated in chapter one, he records January 6th as the birth date of Jesus Christ. Yet due to the dishonest manipulation of his text through insertions, his information is distorted, confused, and lost from common understanding.

Note the absurdity. Just before the alterations to the text of *Stromata,* Clement clearly states his position on the date of Christ's birth documenting it through subtraction from the date of the death of a caesar. The distorting scribes had apparently not decoded Clement's words, or perhaps they took it upon themselves to "correct" them. In arrogance a succession of scribes insert multiple alternative dates for Christ's birth, His baptism, and His Crucifixion.

It will be proven that multiple scribes inserted their preferred positions into Clement's Stromata. Some of the impostors were clearly Roman in orientation, yet each insertion attempts to translate dates from Jewish or Julian calendars into various Egyptian calendar dates. Obviously, if one hoped to deceive by putting dating information into another's mouth, they needed to do so in the language of their victim's calendar. However, the interlopers exposed their deception by not using his style or methodology. The evidence contained within the insertions, which were made after Clement's death, point to multiple sources, each promoting the beliefs of their own period.

The following words in bold are the phrases inserted into *Stromata 1, 21.* After each section of boldened words a brief explanation of their intended purpose and inauthenticity is provided.

Errant Insertion #1

And there are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord's birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus, and in the twenty-fifth day of *Pachon*.

Clement had just finished stating a specific date for Christ's birth. Why would he immediately self-refute? The 25th of Pachon would correctly translate to May 20th, a date that does not appear in any other writing relating to Christ's birth. The date was apparently produced through error. Pachon was the ninth month of the Egyptian calendar. The ninth month after the start of a Jewish year beginning in March of the Julian calendar would equate to December. The insertion suggests the 25th day of that month. The inserter was attempting to point to a December 25th birthdate.

As shown in chapter one, during the first two centuries A.D. the Church understood that Christ was born in the spring during the first month of the Jewish religious calendar. During the third century the Roman Catholic Church was happy to accept the position of Africanus that Jesus' conception was the mystically significant date of the vernal equinox.

The Egyptian understanding placed the vernal equinox on the 25th of *Phamenoth*. The Church made a mistake in translation in thinking *Phamenoth* 25th equated to March 25th which was the understood date of the vernal equinox in Rome. In actuality, *Phamenoth* 25th equates to March 21st. The Egyptian and the Julian calendars were slightly out of sync with each other.

Thinking Christ was conceived on March 25th the Church settled on December 25th, nine months later, as His birth. In an attempt to buttress the Church's new position, an inserter used Clement's reputation to his advantage. He put words into Clement's mouth using the month per the Egyptian calendar. Apparently to convince the Eastern Church, he counted forward nine months from Christ's purported conception from the first month of the Jewish calendar that started in March of that year. The inserter used the ninth month in the Egyptian calendar, *Pachon* (*Pachons*), and inserted *Pachon* 25th into Clement's *Stromata* as Christ's birth date - without regard for the fact the Jewish calendar is lunar and therefore does not sync annually with the Egyptian solar calendar. Neither do these two calendars begin in the same season of the year.

The following quote from the Apostolic Constitution (A.D. 375 - 380) supports the 25th of *Pashon*, the ninth month of the Egyptian calendar, becoming equated in the minds of Roman Catholic Church leaders with December 25th and being celebrated in the Western Church's tradition:

> Brethren, observe the festival days, and first indeed the birth-day of our Lord, which is to be celebrated by you on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month.[1]

The above quote is also evidence of the Roman Church seeking to "instruct" the Eastern Church to conform to the Roman Catholic Church's dating of Christ's birth, while recognizing the use of the Jewish calendar within those local church bodies.

John Selden and Johannes Keppler, both highly regarded intellectuals, also support the link between December 25th and *Pachon* 25.[2]

Errant Insertion #2 appearing immediately after #1

And the followers of Basilides hold the day of the baptism as a Festival spending the night before in readings.

The Basilidians were Gnostic heretics. Clement would not have promoted their teachings in his writings. Further, if this information was written by Clement, and he supported the Basilides date for the Baptism of Christ, he would have highlighted the fact the date of the festival the Basilidians observed was exactly the same date he had suggested for the birth date of Christ. The inserter apparently missed this fact, otherwise he would have tied the two events together in his insertion.

The scribe was promoting the Basilidians and their beliefs with this insertion. Another insertion also specifies the date the Basilides recognized for the baptism of Christ, as will be shown.

Errant insertion #3

And they say that it was the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the fifteenth day of the month Tubi;

Tubi is the Egyptian month roughly equivalent to January. This day is equal to January 10th in the Julian calendar. It seems the inserter was attempting to suggest either a transposed January 15th, or a correctly translated date of January 10th for the baptism of Christ before some would settle upon January 6th.

Regarding, "the fifteenth year of Tiberius," it is logical to assume the inserter was counting Tiberius' reign from the death of Augustus in A.D. 14. This was likely common by the third century which is the soonest these insertions could have occurred. Thus, he was errantly suggesting Christ was baptized in A.D. 28.

Errant insertion #4 which is attached to insertion #3

And some that it was the eleventh of the same month.

This Egyptian date is equal to January 6th. This date for Jesus' baptism was promoted by the Basilidians and was temporarily adopted in Jerusalem as well as Armenia. It seems the addition of this date after the 15th of Tubi was an attempt to replace the first date and was probably added by a later scribe.

Errant insertion #5 moving Christ's chronology forward as it deals with the date of His Crucifixion.

And treating of His passion, with very great accuracy, some say that it took place in the sixteenth year of Tiberius, on the twenty-fifth of Phamenoth;

This insertion may or may not have been made by the same individual as the one who made the previous addition, but it embraces the same timing of Tiberius' reign. The inserter recorded this as *Phamenoth* 25th of the sixteenth year of Tiberias," (A.D. 29 by reckoning from Augustus' death).

Phamenoth in the Egyptian calendar is the rough equivalent to March. The inserter was probably attempting to suggest March 25th. However, the correct conversion from March 25th to the Egyptian calendar would be *Phamenoth* 29th. These dates do not match the Jewish calendar for a 14 *Nisan*, the correct date of His death, in any proposed year of the Crucifixion. The inserter was neither an expert in Egyptian or Jewish calendars. He was, however, probably promoting Tertullian's chronology as this insertion teaches both Tertullian's historically impossible positions of a one-year ministry and a March 25th A.D. 29 Crucifixion of Christ.[3]

A Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud says a righteous man would die on the date of his birth.[4] This March 25th dating embraces this Jewish belief. March 25th is the incorrectly translated date for the vernal equinox Africanus taught was Christ's conception date in 3 B.C. As discussed in chapter one, the vernal equinox was 7 *Nisan* in the Jewish calendar in 3 B.C. Africanus' was attempting to commemorate 7 *Nisan* because this date had been passed down through the church fathers.

Errant insertion #6 being attached to #5 by a semicolon.

And others the twenty-fifth of Pharmuthi

Pharmuthi is the Egyptian calendar month that is roughly equivalent to the Julian month of April. *Pharmuthi* 25th in the Egyptian calendar converts to April 21st in the Julian calendar. Again, the writer is writing with an incorrect understanding of the Egyptian calendar. Instead of converting the date correctly, the Roman inserter again brings the 25th from the Egyptian calendar and marries it to the correct Julian month equivalent to *Pharmuthi*, April. Thus, the inserter is pointing to April 25th. This information identifies the year the inserter was promoting. April 25th of A.D. 31 is in fact 14 *Nisan* of that year. If Jesus Christ was Crucified in A.D.31 this date would have been correct.

Errant insertion #7 being attached to #6.

And others say that on the nineteenth of Pharmuthi the Savior suffered.

This insertion is not made by the same scribe who made the last one or two insertions. This inserter was accurate in his conversion between Egyptian and Julian calendars, the prior interlopers were not. He understood the 19th of *Pharmuti* was actually the 14th of April in the Julian calendar. However, this scribe was attempting move the year of the Crucifixion forward one year. For April 14th Julian of A.D. 32 is 14 *Nisan*, the correct Hebrew date of Jesus' death. If Jesus Christ was Crucified in A.D. 32 this information would be correct.

Each insertion demonstrates a progression based upon a teacher who was in prominence at the time or the date the Church was endeavoring to support at the time. Just as the suggested dates for the birth of Christ migrated forward in time through the first few centuries of church history, so too the suggested dating for the Crucifixion migrated forward in order that the years of Christ's life and ministry would stay somewhat consistent.

Errant Insertion #8, dealing again with the Birth Date

Further, others say that He was born on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of *Pharmuthi*.

Now after moving forward from birth, through baptism, and then to the Crucifixion, one more scribe used Clement's reputation to propose one more date for the birth of Christ. The dates listed in this insertion would have encompassed 1 *Nisan* of 1 B.C. Remember the Jewish day began at dusk at roughly 6 p.m. Therefore, 1 *Nisan* would have begun on *Pharmuthi* 24 at dusk. At midnight the Egyptian calendar date changed to the next day (*Phamuthi* 25). It is likely, 1 *Nisan* is being identified here since it is New Year's Day of the Jewish religious calendar in 1 B.C.

It is particularly unfortunate the Basilidians' bogus date for Christ's baptism was added to Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*. This date for Christ's baptism eventually became attached to Clement's date for the birth of Christ and they were apparently communicated together. If these dates had not already been celebrated together by some, they certainly became joined in religious ceremonies in Jerusalem. Or perhaps they migrated together in an altered copy of Clement's work and were the source of the dating for Christ's birth and baptism in Jerusalem.

It appears both the birth and the baptism of Christ were celebrated together on January 6th under Bishop Macarius

of Jerusalem who served from A.D. 312 – c. 334.[5] Then, Cyril, who became bishop of Jerusalem A.D. 350 - 386, wrote the *Catecheses* and removed the celebration of the baptism of Christ from January 6th. He did so in his church most likely due to its association by that time with the Ebionites.[6] Yet the birth of Christ continued to be celebrated on January 6th in parts of the Church in Jerusalem until the middle of the sixth century.[7]

The dating of Christ's birth and the dating of His baptism on January 6th moved beyond Israel and extended at least to Armenia. Some say these events were attached to January 6th before or during the fourth century in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.[8]

The Western Church, led by Rome, settled upon December 25th for the birth of Christ early in the third century. Yet the date of Christ's birth was a serious bone of contention in churches in the Eastern Mediterranean area and also within Armenia. The following quote from Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (A.D. 320 – 403) is a stern rejection of the Western Church's dating. It provides chronological information and context for the battle over Christmas dating in the region. (Salamis is an island just off the west coast of Greece.)

> Greeks, I mean idolaters, celebrate this day on the eighth before the Kalends of January [December 25], which Romans call *Saturnalia*... For this division between the signs of the zodiac, which is a solstice, comes on the eighth before the Kalends of January, and the day begins to lengthen because the light is receiving its increase. And it completes a period of thirteen days until the eighth before the Ides of January [January 6], the day of Christ's birth.[9]

Armenian Church historian Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare asserts Armenia kept **only** the celebration of the **baptism** of Christ on January 6th until A.D. 440.[10] It

would seem the Armenian Church received the bogus baptism date from some source without hearing of Clement's date for the birth of Christ. Then for thirty years the Armenian Church added a December 25th celebration of the birth of Christ. In about A.D. 482 Armenian Bishop John Mandakuni removed baptism from a January 6th recognition and replaced it with the celebration of the Birth of Christ on that date.[11]

The celebration of Christ's birth was of such cultural and political importance in the Western Church, powerful leaders of that body attempted to force Armenia to accept the Western Church's December 25th date. Byzantine Emperor Maurice who ruled from A.D. 582 - 602 compelled the Armenian church to use the Western dating for Christ's birth in the Greek part of Armenia. Thirty years later, Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, who reigned A.D. 610 – 641, imposed the Western Church's dating upon the rest of the country.[12]

These forced changes did not last long. Within the hearts of the Armenian Church and its leadership they clung to their accepted date of the birth of Christ. Ananias of Shirak (A.D. c. 600 – 670) reasserted the old Armenian January 6th dating of the birth of Christ within the country.[13] (Shirak is a city in Northwest Armenia.) He did so through the production of a religious calendar that defended that date for Christ's birth. Ananias stated he formed this Armenian religious calendar from dating obtained from Alexandria. In doing so, he almost certainly pointed to the work of chronologist and theologian Clement of Alexandria.[14] Ananias' words provide Therefore, there is good cause to believe Clement's *Stromata* was the source of the dating of Christ's birth in Armenia.

In addition to the January 6th dating for Christ's birth, Ananias' calendar marked the dating of the Resurrection celebration in his country for years 828-1360 (not A.D.) but by the "**reckoning of the Alexandrians**." [15] Johannes

Ozniensis (aka John of Otzun or John of Odsun) became head of the Armenian church as its Catholicos in A.D. 718. He instituted Ananias' religious calendar and dating for Christ's birth which are still used today.[16]

The Timing of the Divisions of the Priests

In order to determine when Zacharias' eighth course was serving in the Temple and when he received the message from the angel Gabriel, one must first understand how the courses functioned in their rotations. Then, one must determine when the rotations of the priestly divisions began. Many theories have been offered. Several theories speculate the rotation of the priests began afresh each year at a specific point. The suggested point in time being either the Sabbath immediately before or immediately after either 1 *Nisan* in the spring or 1 *Tishrei* in the fall, or that the service began on one of those dates. Yet there is no indication in Scripture or history the rotation began anew each year. Rather, the rotation continued from year to year with the divisions following in their order. Therefore, the theories dependent upon the restart of the rotation at any point during the year need to be abandoned.

Another type of incorrect theory revolves around speculation the divisions were interrupted in their progression by those feast weeks that brought every male to Jerusalem. These theories then require the determination if such an interruption occurred during the two one-week-long feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles only, or did a week also get inserted for Pentecost even though it was just a one-day event.

While it is true all the courses served during the three feasts when every male was required to appear in Jerusalem, the 168-day course cycle was uninterrupted (24 courses of priests times seven days).[1] The courses served from Sabbath to Sabbath. The course leaving service would perform the morning sacrifice on the Sabbath and then leave the Temple after noon. The course beginning service would be present from noon of the weekly Sabbath and then perform the evening sacrifice.[2] The priests of the course who were on duty were at their posts regardless of the day in the week the feasts began

and ended. During the three great feasts, priests from other courses aided with the responsibilities related to the great feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16, II Chronicles 5:11). Regarding the sacrificing of lambs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for example, Edersheim says, "all the twenty-four courses were on duty, and all their services would be called for, although only the course for that week would that afternoon engage in the ordinary Service, which preceded that of the Feast."[3] Therefore, the theories relying on some adjustment to the rotation due to the feasts are incorrect.

There is one other theory that warrants deeper analysis. Some have said, instead of determining the weeks of the service by deciphering when the courses began, they believe the order can be determined based on the point in time of the destruction of the second Temple. This belief is promoted based on the assertion the first course was serving at the destruction of the second Temple, which occurred in the week inclusive of 9 *Av*, (August 4, A.D. 70). This position originates from a statement of Rabbi Yose ben Halafta from the second century. The quotation recorded in *Arachin* 11b is:

> Whence do we know that the second Temple was also destroyed on the 9th of *Ab* [*Av*]? We have learned in a Boraitha: "A happy event is credited to the day on which another happy event happened, while a calamity is ascribed to the day when another calamity occurred;" and it was said that when the first Temple was destroyed it was on the eve preceding the 9th of *Ab* [*Av*], which was also in the night at the close of the Sabbath and also the close of the Sabbatical year. The watch at the time was that of Jehoiarib, (the first course), and the Levites were chanting in their proper places, at that moment reciting the passage (Psalms 94:23): "And he will bring back upon them their own injustice, and in their own wickedness will he

> destroy them;" and they did not have time to end the passage, which concludes, "yea, he will destroy them - the Lord our God," before the enemy entered and took possession of the Temple. This happened also at the destruction of the second Temple.[4]

If one stipulates the courses continued to serve until the fire began on 9 *Av* of 586 B.C. when the first Temple was burned and the priestly order due to begin service after noon on the Sabbath of 9 *Av* in A.D. 70 did so, it would have been the same course of priests. The rabbi can be credited for recording this information. Yet, although unpleasant to challenge his information, much of what he says is countered by a trustworthy eyewitness to the destruction of the second Temple - Josephus.

There is no way the Temples were in use for religious purposes up until 9 *Av* and the setting of the fires in the years the two Temples were destroyed. There was also no singing of the traditional Psalms up to that point, as the Rabbi states.

Regarding the first Temple, singing and sacrifice would have been impossible for the month preceding that Temple's destruction. During that month, the Babylonians controlled the city of Jerusalem (II Kings 25:1-9). It would not have been possible to conduct the business of the daily sacrifice since the Babylonians had no respect for the Temple and its service as can be seen by their conduct. They helped themselves to enter the Temple as described in the Talmud in *Taanith* 29a.

> On the seventh of Av gentiles entered the Sanctuary, and on the seventh and the eighth they ate there and desecrated it, engaging in acts of fornication. And on the ninth, adjacent to nightfall, they set fire to it, and it continuously burned the entire day, as it is stated: "Woe unto us, for the day has declined, for the shadows of

> the evening are stretched out" (Jeremiah 4:6). This verse is interpreted as a prophecy about the evening when the Temple was burned. And this is what Rabbi Yohanan meant when he said: Had I been alive in that generation, I would have established the fast only on the tenth of Av because most of the Sanctuary was burned on that day.[5]

Actually, the daily sacrifice within the first Temple had most likely been corrupted or ended over ten years before the first Temple burned. It would have been difficult to conduct daily sacrifices in the Temple since 2 *Adar* (March 16, 597 B.C.) when the Babylonians first conquered Jerusalem and took away all the golden objects from the Temple (II Chronicles 36:10 and 18, II Kings 24:13).[6] Surely, the Ark of the Covenant itself would have been stolen at that point along with the rest of the gold they could easily steal, or more likely, the Ark had been hidden by this date. Further, Scripture says during the reign of Zedekiah, between the two conquests by Babylon, "all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful following all the abominations of the nations and they defiled the house of the Lord which He had sanctified in Jerusalem" (II Chronicles 36:14).

Josephus watched and recorded the attack and the destruction of the second Temple. He describes in detail the piles of bodies littering the Temple and its grounds as the Temple was taken.[7] Here is a small part of his quote:

> … the Jews were so weary, and under such consternation, that they refrained from any attacks; but on the next day they gathered their whole force together, and ran upon those that guarded the outward court of the temple, very boldly, through the east gate, and this about the second hour of the day… and as those Romans came back upon them, they retreated again until the fifth hour of the day they were

> overborne, and shut themselves up in the inner [court of the] temple… and then attacked the Romans again, … but these Romans put the Jews to flight, and proceeded to the holy house itself. At which time one of the soldiers without staying for any orders, … and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, … As the flames went upward the Jews made a great clamor such as so mighty an affliction required and ran together to prevent it; … Now, round about the altar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another; as at the steps going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above [on the altar] fell down.

Despite the pleading of Emperor Titus to leave the Temple so it could be spared, it was used as a citadel, and its grounds were a battlefield.[8] Priests had stopped singing songs or offering sacrifices weeks before on July 14, A.D. 70 (17 *Tammuz*, 3830).[9] Due to the siege, no lambs would have been available for sacrifice by this time.[10]

The Talmudic reference from *Arachin* 11b indeed does have both correct and incorrect timing information. The matching of the same course being in service on 9 *Av* can be used to verify the years of the destruction of the Temples being 586 B.C and A.D. 70. The accuracy of this information is supported by Edwin R. Thiele who presented 586 B.C. for the destruction of the first Temple, with *9 Av* of that year being August 16.[11] However, 9 *Av* probably ran from Wednesday evening through Thursday that year. It is unlikely it was a Sabbath as the Rabbi suggests in *Arachin* 11b. Perhaps some confusion of the records occurred because March 16, 597 B.C., when the Babylonians first entered Jerusalem and likely corrupted worship, it was a Sabbath[12] and the second Temple also burned on a Sabbath, August 4, A.D. 70.[13]

A.D. 70 (Jewish year AM 3830 /AM 3831) was very likely a year of Jubilee as the Rabbi says and some support.[14] However, the assertion in *Arachin* 11b that the years the temples were burned were both Sabbath years is problematic. A Sabbath year (year of Jubilee) is every 50th year. Neither the year when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians the first time 597 B.C. (AM 3164/AM 3165) nor when the Babylonians entered Jerusalem the second time and burned Solomon's Temple 586 B.C. (AM 3175/AM 3176) can be a year of Jubilee if A.D. 70 was such a year. In summary, the Talmudic sections, while interesting and providing some information, are not reliable to determine the rotation of the priests. This conclusion means it is necessity to determine the rotation of the priests from its inception.

King Solomon opened the first Temple with sacrifices. From the completion of the Temple's dedication onward, there were sacrifices in the Temple. To have sacrifices, priests are needed. Therefore, it is safe to say the rotation of the priests began around the time of the temple dedication.

As stated early in this text, even though the service had been interrupted by the Babylonians, it was **restored in the correct rotational order** (Ezra 6:18). Later, the Seleucids also stopped temple worship until the Maccabees reestablished the temple service with the courses **in their proper order**.[15] Since the priests were careful to pick up the rotation in their order as though it had not been interrupted, it is possible to determine when the courses served based upon when the first Temple was dedicated and the rotations began.

King David had longed to build a temple for God, but he was not permitted. God told him that task would be left for his son to pursue (I Chronicles 28:3). This realization no doubt disappointed David and forced him to focus on the succession to his throne. He had already promised the kingdom to Solomon, but he had not embraced Solomon

as a co-regent with him until his decision was forced by an attempt at power by another one of his sons, Adonijah (I Kings 1:5-10). With this treason exposed, David has Solomon declared king (I Kings 1:32-35). Some might assume this moment marked the beginning of Solomon's reign. It did not, as Solomon's loyalty to his father and his good judgment extended David's time on the throne.

Finegan explains the two possibilities: "At what point is the reign considered to begin? This point most often coincides, no doubt, with the death of the preceding ruler... Other possibilities as to when his reign is considered actually to begin include the time when a co-regency is established..."[16] Yet Scripture clarifies this point with regard to Solomon's reign. It says Solomon did not sit on the throne until after his father's death. This fact can be seen in the following verse:

> *Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.* (I Kings 2:10-12)

Although Scripture does not directly say when David died, one can ascertain the year of the first Temple's construction and the reigns of David and Solomon if one knows the year Israel left Egypt (I Kings 6:1). Both this date and when Solomon's reign began have been determined by the dating of Edwin R. Thiele and before him by George Smith documented in his book: The *Assyrian Eponym Canon*, published in 1875.

The Talmud says David died on Pentecost or during the season of Pentecost.[17] This feast was on May 31, in 970 B.C. Nevertheless, if the Talmud is wrong at this point, it has no effect on the analysis of this text. The reason the

specific day or week is moot is because the start of Solomon's reign is not assessed based upon even the year David died. Rather, because of the work of George Smith, the beginning of Solomon's reign can be determined by counting backward from an identifiable date that can be attached to the reign of King Jehu of Judah and King Ahab of Israel.

Although Israel and Judah did not put year dates on the reigns of their kings, they did provide the lengths of those reigns, which is vital for chronology. Which Israelite and Judean kings reigned concurrent with various Assyrian Kings is also known due to records of military engagements and tributes. This information then correlates within the Assyrian records to multiple ecplises.[18] Astronomical calculations have determined the dates of these eclipses. Moving backward or forward from those points in time provides the dating of the years of the reigns of the Jewish kings.

George Smith's work on the Assyrian clay tablets and the later work by Edwin R. Thiele's of dating the Jewish kings are extraordinary. Smith's work mentioned earlier, and Thiele's article "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* Volume 3, No. 3 (July 1944) pages 141-147, his article in *Vetus Testamentum*, Volume 4, Fascicle 2 (April 1954), as well as his book: *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* are fascinating for those interested in Jewish chronology. The work of Professor V. Coucke of the Grand Seminaire de Bruges should be noted. His work is similar to and predates Thiele.[19] For those who prefer video Joel Kramer's Expedition Bible presentation entitled, "How we KNOW the dates for the Old Testament!" will be a treat.

Using dating from Thiele's work, the first year of the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is counted as being from 1 *Tishrei*, 930 B.C. to 1 *Tishrei*, 929 B.C.[20] He arrives at this date because Judah, like the kingdoms around it, used regnal dating.[21] The kingdoms of Israel and Judah used

both accession-year dating and nonaccession-year dating of regnal years at different points in their history.[22] (See the appendix, "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**" for an explanation of regnal dating.) Fortunately, the system used for the reign of King Solomon can be deduced. According to Edwin R. Thiele, the Kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam used accession-year dating.[23] They began marking the beginning of the royal years from the first of the month of *Ethanim,* the earlier name for *Tishrei*.[24] This allowance for the political New Year to be near the fall equinox is supported by other chronologists including Benson and Ellicott.[25]

Rehoboam was Solomon's son and immediate heir to his throne. If that was the system in place to count when his reign began than almost certainly it was the system in place for his father's reign.[26] Under the accession-year regnal dating system Solomon's years would not be counted from the day of King David's death but it would have been regarded to have begun on *Ethanim* (or *Tishrei*), the next civic new year.

Since Rehoboam began to reign 1 *Ethanim/Tishrei* of 930 B.C. and Solomon was credited with reigning 40 years (I Kings 11:42), it can be deduced Solomon's reign officially was counted from1 *Ethanim/Tishrei*, or September 21, of 970 B.C.[27] From this point Scripture provides the information necessary to determine the timing of events related to the Temple and the priests.

I Kings 6:1 records Solomon started the Temple's construction in the month of *Ziv* (the second month of the spring religious calendar) during his fourth year of reign. Based upon the information above, it was in May/June of 966 B.C. (AM 2796).

> *Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the*

second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord. (I Kings 6:1)

Abib (later called *Nisan*) marked the first month of spring and immediately preceded *Ziv* in the ancient Canaanite/Israelite calendar.[28] I Kings 6:38 states the structure took seven years and was completed in the month of *Bul*, or October/November of 960 B.C. in the Jewish year 2802, Solomon's eleventh year of reign.[29]

In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, in the month of Ziv. And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul*, which is the eighth month* [of the spring religious calendar], *the house was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.* (I Kings 6:37-38)

* (*Ethanim*, *Bul*, *Abib*, and *Ziv* are names of months in the ancient Canaanite/Israelite calendar used in Solomon's time. *Abib* and *Ziv* were the first and second months of the spring-oriented religious calendar. *Ethanim* and *Bul* were the first and second months of the fall-oriented civil calendar.[30]

I Kings chapter 7 documents that after the main building was complete, work continued on the external pillars of the Temple and the creation of the necessary furnishings for worship. II Chronicles 4 records the finishing touches on the Temple and its utensils this way:

Solomon also made all the things that were in the house of God: even the golden altar, the tables with the bread of the Presence on them, the lampstands with their lamps of pure gold, to burn in front of the inner sanctuary in the way prescribed; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs of gold, of purest gold; and the snuffers, the bowls, the spoons, and the fire-pans of pure gold; and the entrance of the house, its inner doors for

the holy of holies, and the doors of the house,
that is, of the nave, of gold.
(II Chronicles 4:19-22)

According to I Kings 8, when the Temple and its tools were ready, Solomon assembled the leaders of Israel in the seventh month (spring religious calendar) at the feast (Tabernacles) to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the Holy of Holies. This seventh month was the following year.[31] The dedication of the Temple took place in 959 B.C. Perhaps the following listing will clarify the previous information.

Political Years Counted from First of *Ethanim/Tishrei* (fall) to the Next. Religious Events Were Marked from First of *Abib/Nisan* (Spring-oriented Calendar)

(*Ethanim* and *Abib* were ancient names for these months, *Tishrei* and *Nisan* were the names for the same lunar period during the time of Christ)

David deceased around
Pentecost 970 B.C. May/June 970 B.C.

Solomon's reign was officially recognized as beginning the first day of the fall civil calendar - Sept. 21, 970 B.C.

1st year of reign ended	Oct. 10, 969 B.C.
2nd year of reign ended	Sept. 28, 968 B.C.
3rd year of reign ended	Sept. 18, 967 B.C.

Temple work began in the Second month of Solomon's 4th year according to the spring religious calendar – May/June 966 B.C.

4th year of reign ended	Oct. 7, 966 B.C.
5th year of reign ended	Sept. 26, 965 B.C.
6th year of reign ended	Sept. 14, 964 B.C.
7th year of reign ended	Oct. 3, 963 B.C.
8th year of reign ended	Sept. 23, 962 B.C.
9th year of reign ended	Oct. 12, 961 B.C.
10th year of reign ended	Sept. 30, 960 B.C.

Main part of Temple completed in the Eighth month, by spring religious calendar (second by the fall political calendar), during Solomon's 11th political year of reign - Oct./Nov. 960 B.C.
(work on pillars, furnishings and utensils continued)

11th year of reign ended dusk of Sept. 18, 959 B.C.

All preparations completed
Celebration/Dedication began with New Years' Day

The following verses describe the work of the priests at the temple dedication. There are two things within these verses that are important to notice. First, "all the priests are laboring without regard for division." This information strongly implies the rotation of the priests did not begin until after the dedication activities were completed. The second piece of information that could be confusing is the highlighting of the trumpets. Trumpet blasts marked the new year then, as they do now.[32] Yet the special 120 trumpets blown by priests were not marking the new year on *Ethanim* 1. Rather, they were marking the entrance of the Ark into the Temple on *Ethanim* 8.

> *And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim* [earlier name for the seventh month of the religious calendar: Tishrei]*, which is the seventh month. Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the Lord and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils, which were in the tent, and the priests and the Levites brought them up.* (I Kings 8:2-4)

> *Thus all the work that Solomon performed for the house of the Lord was finished…Then Solomon assembled to Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' households of the sons of Israel, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to the king at the feast, that is in the seventh month* [by the religious calendar]*. Then all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark…And King Solomon and all the congregations of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen, that they could not be counted or numbered. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the*

Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim…

*And when the priests came forth from the holy place (**for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves without regard to divisions**), and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them **one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison** when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting", then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.* (II Chronicles 5:1-14) (bolding added for emphasis)

Due to Scriptural requirements for sacrifice, it was necessary for the priests to begin their normal course duties after the both the week of dedication celebrations and the Feast of Tabernacles, which immediately followed the week of dedication, were completed. This information is recorded in I Kings 8:65.

With this information in mind, the following verses are more easily understood. They confirm 959 B.C as the year of the dedication. The events are described in these sections from I Kings and II Chronicles. Here is how I Kings describes the occasion:

> *So Solomon observed the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, for seven days and seven more days, even fourteen days.*
>
> *On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.*
> (I Kings 8:65-66)

Please note this section in I Kings counts two weeks of celebration before the "Eighth Day" which is the day after the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. The "Eighth Day" is always the 22nd day of *Tishrei*, or in the time of Solomon, the 22nd of *Ethanim*. The two-week period I Kings is describing begins with 8 *Tishrei/Ethanim*.

The texts clearly state when the celebration ended the people were free to go. They were blessed as they left, after the week-long Feast of Tabernacles that was after a week-long special feast of Dedication.[33] These two weeks were of course after a week-long period of purification/sanctification for the priests so they could serve. These verses provide the conclusion to the Temple's dedication and Feast of Tabernacles:

> *So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, who came from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar they observed seven days, and the feast seven days.*

Then on the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and happy of heart because of the goodness that the Lord had shown to David and to Solomon and to His people Israel. (II Chronicles 7: 8-10)

The days of the month rotated in relation to the day in the week a date occurred just as contemporary calendars. Therefore, only periodically would the days align as they did in the year the dedication occurred. Here is how they aligned in 959 B.C. (the first day began with the evening of the first date – September 18):

1 *Tishrei* Sept. 18/19	Sabbath Day - New Year's Day
8 *Tishrei* Sept. 25/26	Sabbath Day - the day the Ark was brought into the Temple and the Altar was dedicated at the beginning of the week of dedication (I Kings 8:1, 62-66)
15 *Tishrei* Oct. 2/3	Sabbath Day - started the week of the Feast of Tabernacles
22 *Tishrei* Oct. 9/10 959 B.C.)	Sabbath Day - the normal function and normal rotation of the priests began at noon (1st Course began rotations)
23 *Tishrei* Oct. 10/11	Day part of "Eighth Day" - A Sunday, Jews allowed to walk long distances, the people are blessed and sent on their way home.

To reiterate, the first course would have begun the rotations of the priests after the Feast of Tabernacles on 22 *Tishrei*, October 9/10, 959 B.C. From this point it is possible to calculate when Zacharias received his message from God delivered by the angel. (After the start of rotations new weeks of service began at noon of the weekly Sabbath day, thus the evening part of the prior day (the prior Julian date) is not included in the following chart.)

Course Rotations from Inception until Zacharias' Service

from October 10, 959 B.C. to October 10, 7 B.C.

952 full years X 365.25 days	=	347,718 days
347,718 / 7 days	=	49,674 weeks

from October 10, 7 B.C. to November 21, 7 B.C.
to add six weeks to complete the 2070th rotation

49674 plus six weeks	=	49,680 weeks
49680 / 24-week rotations	=	2,070 rotations

November 21 – 28 of 7 B.C. would be the 1st Course's week of service starting their 2,071st rotation

January 9 – 16, 6 B.C. would be the turn of the 8th course, the Abijah course, including Zacharias. These dates are the week of service in the 2,071st rotation that brought Zacharias to the Temple when he received the angelic message predicting the birth of John the Baptist.

*****

The earliest point necessary to chronologically anchor for this text was the beginning of the construction of Solomon's Temple in 966 B.C. Although beyond the scope of this text, scholars have evaluated chronology back from this point in time to another major Biblical event: the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. The year for this event is verifiable through cross-referencing several concreate events and dates. One scholar making a concise and compelling case for the year of the Exodus is archeologist Joel P. Kramer, M.A. I recommend his vlog: *Expedition Bible* in general and would specifically urge those curious about the year of the exodus to be informed by his post entitled: "Exodus Pharaoh Explained!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JusQxiTXnE

Where Mary Gave Birth

And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

The Greek word Luke uses in Luke 2:7 that is translated "inn" is not the word for a commercial establishment, SGW #3829 *pandōchĕiŏn*. Instead, he uses *kataluma,* SGW #2646, which means "a place to stay" or "guest chamber" and can be a house, an inn, or a guest room.[1] Granted, public inns used the word *kataluma* to describe the upper sleeping area that was shared by the wealthier guests. This room in a public inn was above a lower room where belongings could be stored, and servants could sleep. Grain or hay to be sold to the travelers for their animals would also be stored in this lower room. Animals were kept for the night outside of the lower room in a courtyard, usually within a fence.

It is possible the upper room of a public inn is what is mentioned in Luke 2:7, but it is not likely. Bethlehem was a small town on the top of a hill. It might be someone's destination, but not a common location for a wayfarer on his way south to Egypt or north to Jerusalem. Most likely Bethlehem did not have a public inn.

If Luke wanted to communicate that the location which was full, was a commercial inn, logically he would have used the specific word: *pandōchĕiŏn*. *Pandōchĕiŏn*, literally translated, means "all to receive." Luke certainly knew the word as he used it in Luke 10:25-37. In this story, a wounded man is taken to stay in a *pandōchĕiŏn,* with the bill being paid by a good Samaritan. Instead regarding the family of Jesus, Luke used *kataluma* in Luke 2:7, exactly the same word he again used in Luke 22:11 (as does Mark 14:15) to describe the guest or upper room Christ used with His disciples for the Last Supper.[2]

Since Luke knew and precisely used both words in other places in his Gospel, one might ask, "What upper room is Luke referring to in Luke 2:7?"

There are three prominent theories regarding the place God provided for Mary to deliver Christ. One theory has developed recently. It suggests Christ was born in the *Migdal Eder*, which are the Hebrew words meaning "tower of the flock." [3] These types of towers typically had an upper floor to use as a lookout post and a lower room for the birthing of lambs.

This theory equates the phrase "will come" with birth and equates "the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem" with "the Messiah." It is based on Micah 4:8, which is only a few verses before Micah 5:2 which informs the Savior would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 4:8 says:

> *And as for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come - Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*

There was such a tower roughly four to five miles south of Jerusalem that marked the radius within which animals "found" were to be used for sacrifice to God.[4] This tower was mentioned in Genesis 35:21 as being on the road from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Jerome recorded it was about one mile north of Bethlehem.[5]

The tower north of Bethlehem was used by the shepherds who were responsible for the temple flocks to birth and inspect new-born lambs.[6] The inspection was to determine if the new lambs were at that point acceptable for future use as a sacrifice.

Edersheim notes a brief prophecy recorded in the Talmud that the Messiah's birth would be announced from the *Migdal Eder*. This prophecy can be found in Targum pseudo-Jonathan 35:21.[7] However, no evidence was found

suggesting Christ would be born in the tower itself within the work of Edersheim who addresses this theory, nor the Talmudic prophecy, nor any other ancient prophecy or scholarship, nor any Scriptural text.

It is true, a tower of the flock would have had swaddling cloth present and a manger, but so would many locations in the Bethlehem area. In addition, the birthing area of such a tower was trampled by sheep and shepherds with dung on their feet. It would also likely have the residue of the birthing matter from many ewes. The amount of filth present does not comport well with a place any man or woman would pick for the birth of their child.

The shepherds who arrived to see the baby by the angel's instructions would have known of this place and would also have had family in the community. It would have been woefully bad etiquette, and against their culture, for them to allow the family to remain in such a filthy workspace when they had homes nearby. The fact they came and went without offering, or rather pressing, the couple to move to a better spot means they must have thought it to be adequate. Therefore, Jewish culture of the period specifically rules out the theory Christ was born in a *Migdal Eder*. This location is also excluded when considering the statements of Justin Martyr and other early fathers which will be considered shortly.

A second theory is that the birth occurred in the home of a local relative where the couple took up lodging. To understand this theory, one needs to consider what the average house of the period looked like and how the average family would function. Houses were most often simple, small structures. For most families it was a one-room dwelling with a slanted floor as referenced in Matthew 5:14-15 which records Jesus speaking of how one lamp would light "the whole house." Such lighting can only occur if it is a one-room house.

Immediately inside the entrance of a home was an area where the family's few animals would spend the night. Because of the custom of keeping the animals in the house for protection, outside stables were unheard of.[8] The animals were kept in the lowest part of the floor so debris would not flow up to the family area. Between the animals' area and the family area would be one or more feeding troughs or mangers so the animals could feed during the night without needing further attention. Each morning the animals would be taken out of the home into the yard where they would be tied so their area could be cleaned. This tethering near the house provided for the animals' care and protected the family from having them stolen, as they represented a major part of the household's wealth.

Jesus Christ again told a story using the image of a one-room house, this time with animals kept inside, recorded in Luke 13:10-17. In this passage Jesus is confronted for healing a woman on the Sabbath. Verse 13 records Jesus saying to the woman, "you have been freed." The word used was SGW #630, *apŏluō*. This word means "release," "loose," or "set free." When the Pharisees objected to what Christ had done, He refuted them by pointing out they had that very morning "released" their animals from being tied up in the stalls, which were in their homes. So why is it wrong for Him to "loose or release" this woman on the Sabbath. Thus, according to verse 17, He humiliated His opponents.[9]

Located behind the manger(s) within the common home was the family's sleeping/cooking/eating/social area.[10] If an activity was done indoors, it happened here. If the family was not wealthy enough for an upper room or if it was already filled with another guest, this area is generally where visitors would spend the night along with the family.

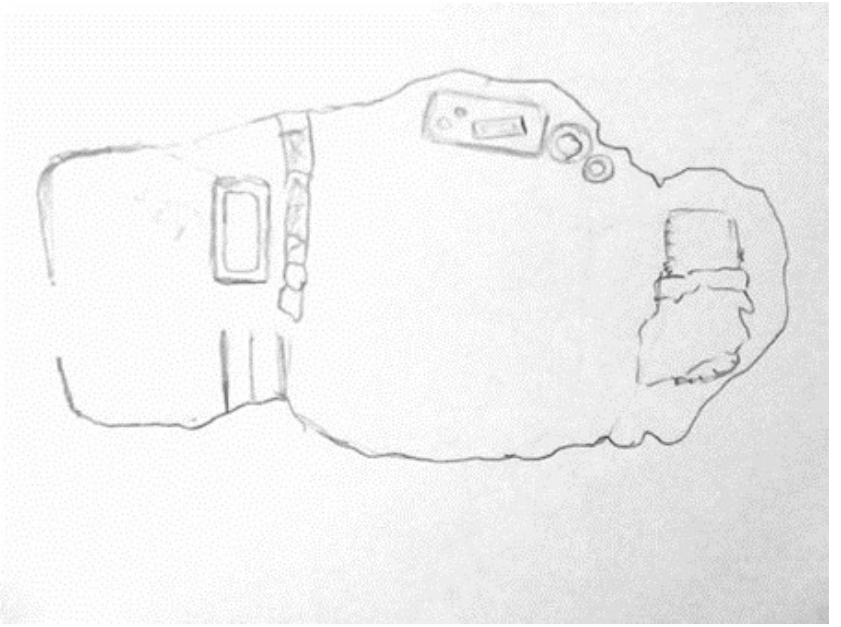
However, if a family was fortunate, they may have a separate upper room, which would be above the family

quarters either in slope or separated by a step or two. A wealthy family might even have their upper room above the main room on a second floor. This second floor was actually the roof of the main floor which then had a thatched roof above it. If one had an upper floor, it was a great place to sit in the evening or to provide a sleeping quarters for a guest. Such a home with a second-floor guest room is described in the story of Elijah recorded in I Kings 17:19.

Scripture does not say whether Bethlehem had a public inn with its upper room. It does not say how many houses in town had upper rooms. It does not say how many houses Joseph visited seeking a place for his family. Yet it is certain the town's guest rooms were full when the family was looking for shelter. If they were not full, some extended family member would likely have made an upper room available. Hospitality was, and still is, a highly valued cultural trait in the Middle East. If anyone in town had a vacant upper room and would not have opened their home to a pregnant woman, who was a relative no less, it would be a disgrace they would have borne the rest of their lives.[11] Remember this town is "the City of David," the King of Israel. Both Joseph and Mary were of his lineage. They were "royals" in King David's ancestral hometown.[12] Mary and Joseph would not have been given a common area if there were better accommodations available, which Scripture says was not the case.

The third possibility is that the birth occurred in a cave on the outskirts of Bethlehem. The use of a cave for a home was not strange during the time of Christ or even today. Caves are common and often used for habitations in Israel.[13] In a way, this third theory has two subsets. The cave the couple used could have been uninhabited, which seems wasteful and unlikely; or it could have already been turned into a home. If it was a cave that had been turned into a home, it is not much different from the second theory already considered. It simply means the house was predominately within a cave. This theory does not exclude

a wood and plaster front having been built on the cave's entrance. The following is a drawing depicting the home of a common family within a cave as likely housed Jesus at His birth.



artwork by Meghan Fedor
@nutmegillustrations

The use of a cave is the oldest of the three possibilities just considered. Moreover, it has historical support. Justin Martyr wrote the following around A.D. 155-160 in his dialogue with Trypho, Chapter (letter) 78:

> But when the child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ and placed Him in a manger, and here the Magi who came from Arabia found Him.[14]

This quote is fascinating for a few reasons. Note how soon after Christ's ministry on Earth this record is made. Certainly, the local population would have recalled and marked the location of the birth of such a major national figure. This practice is common even today. It is logical a culture that kept accurate oral traditions going back a thousand years, would have known where Christ was born not more than 165 years later.

Another thing to note about Justin Martyr's statement is the fact he provided the information that the family continued to reside in this cave through the time of the magi's visit. His record fits the Scriptural account well, as it also says Christ was still residing in Bethlehem within a house several weeks later when the magi arrived (Matthew 2:11).

Roughly a century after Justin Martyr's statement, Origen reinforces the belief Christ was born in a cave. Here are his words recorded as he debates Celsus through a letter written A.D. 246-248:

> With respect to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, if any one desire, after the prophecy of Micah and after the history recorded in the Gospels by the disciples of Jesus, to have additional evidence from other sources, let him know that, in conformity with the narrative in the Gospel regarding His birth, there is shown at Bethlehem the cave where He was born, and the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling-clothes. And this sight is greatly talked of in surrounding places, even among the enemies of the faith, it being said that in this cave was born that Jesus who is worshipped [sic] and reverenced by the Christians.[15]

A third church father records Christ was born in a cave. Jerome, who was from Bethlehem, records in his second letter to Paulinus how the Emperor Hadrian had tried to

deprive Christians their history, recording the following about Christ's birth:

> From the time of Hadrian to the reign of Constantine - a period of about one hundred and eighty years - the spot which had witnessed the resurrection was occupied by a figure of Jupiter; while on the rock where the cross had stood, a marble statue of Venus was set up by the heathen and became an object of worship. The original persecutors, indeed, supposed that by polluting our holy places they would deprive us of our faith in the passion and in the resurrection. Even my own Bethlehem, as it now is, that most venerable spot in the whole world of which the psalmist sings: "The truth hath sprung out of the earth," (Psalms 85:11) was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is of Adonis; and in the very cave where the infant Christ had uttered His earliest cry lamentation was made for the paramour of Venus.[16]

Although intriguing, the first theory discussed regarding *Migdal Eder* is not historically supported. Both theories two and three are valid options. Yet because three trusted historical sources record Christ's birth was in a cave, and since His birth a particular cave has been recognized as the place of His birth, this belief can be trusted. At the time of His birth, the cave may or may not have had a structure in its front, but it most certainly already had a manger. The cave almost certainly had already provided shelter for an animal and was used by a family who invited Joseph and Mary to stay with them. These assumptions match the culture and recognize that such a desirable location would not have been left empty.

Despite the common assumption the family had faced rejection and as a result was relegated to a stable, that was not the case. Having visitors stay in what would have been the common area of a home was not a rejection.

These accommodations would have represented trust in, and concern for, the young family.

Perhaps, the situation and conditions should be considered another way. Christ's birthplace was humble, yet it did have advantages. Due to the premium placed upon hospitality in the culture, it was certainly as clean as possible. The kindness of Sun-bleached fresh straw for bedding would have been sanitary by the standards of that day. Many homes had walls just below the family quarters to partition off the animal area. If the cave-house had such a wall to reduce the noise and smell the family needed to endure, it would have afforded Mary some privacy. Mary would also have a manger next to her side to conveniently place her newborn to keep Him off the floor. Very few women in the last days of pregnancy like going up stairs. Being next to the door for fresh air and a shorter walk to the latrine would probably have been advantageous. The fact it was at the entrance of a cave-house "near the village," as Justin Martyr records, also made the place very accessible to visiting shepherds and magi. The Heavenly Father did not provide opulence for His Son's birth, but He did not fail to meet every need.

The identity of the cave that was at least the back of the home wherein Christ was born was not lost to time. The cave is 38 feet deep by, at its widest, 11 feet.[17] Empress Helena determined a church was to be built on the site during her visit to the Holy Land in A.D. 325.[18] The church was built over the cave of Christ's birth beginning in A.D. 330.[19] Emperor Justinian later restored and expanded the church during his reign, 527-565.[20] This church, the Church of the Nativity, is the oldest Christian Church in continuous use and is registered as a world heritage site. The church is jointly maintained by the following church groups: the Roman Catholic Church, the Armenian Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church.

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Sinless Savior, the Unleavened Bread of Life

During the first few centuries after Christ's work on Earth, the Church believed and aggressively defended that Christ was "fully God." In *Apology* 5, Tertullian records that even Emperor Tiberius recognized Jesus as a "god" and suggested to the Senate Christ be added to the list of gods recognized within the empire.

People who were raised from death or miraculously healed by Christ would have told their experiences to their children's children who would have passed the accounts on to their descendants. For the next several generations, people who heard these testimonials should have and would have believed He was "fully God" on Earth. Yet some within the Church struggled during its first few centuries with the truth He was also "fully man." As a result, the Church wrestled with heresies denying Jesus Christ was completely human.

Centuries removed from Christ's miracles, many people, even theologians who should have known better, wrestled with Jesus Christ being sinless and fully God. Today, many see Him as a man, and only a man. Other victims of this age of ignorance and skepticism wonder if He even really existed. Yes, Jesus Christ existed, was fully God, and lived sinlessly in submission to the Father.

This appendix links defenses of Jesus Christ being sinless and the Son of God. If He was not the Son of God, He was not sinless. If He was not sinless, He could not be the Son of God as Scripture defines the term. These proofs defend both:

1) The words and actions of Jesus Christ prove He is the sinless Son of God. For, He declared He was the sinless Son of God and His actions proved it.

> *He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the*

One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (John 7:18)

This verse records Jesus' statement that He Himself is "true" and there is "no unrighteousness in Him." Jesus Christ asserted His sinlessness. This declaration makes it impossible to embrace the belief Christ was just a good teacher. He was not. If He is not sinless, He is either a deceiver or insane.

He proved He was the sinless Son of God by His Resurrection.

No one has taken it [life] *away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father* (John 10:18, see also Romans 8:11 and Romans 10:9).

If one has the authority to raise himself from the grave, or was given that authority by the Father, He is not lying or crazy to say He is the sinless Son of God. Such power and authority prove the point.

2) If one is a deceiver or insane he might convince himself and some others he is God, but he won't convince God. First century historian Josephus recorded Jesus Christ did astounding miracles.[1] God would not hear and answer such astounding requests for miracles from a liar, or someone who thinks himself to be God, unless being His Son, He is God.

The words and actions of the Father and the Holy Spirit testify to Christ's perfection. Their seal of approval was apparent at Christ's baptism:

... the heavens were opened, and he [John the Baptist] *saw the Spirit of God*

descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.' (Matthew 3:16b-17)

The Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove as a public witness of God's presence and acceptance of Christ. Further, the voice of the Father and His continued presence and empowerment of Christ throughout His ministry, as demonstrated by His miracles, shows the Father's approval of Jesus Christ (John 14:11). Remember the Father's words to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration where He again says, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5b). God does not call a liar His Son, nor does God tell people to listen to (obey) a crazy man.

The Father ultimately testifies to Christ's perfection by allowing Him to sit at His right hand. As recorded in Mark 14:62, Christ asserted He had the privilege of sitting at the Father's right hand. His continuing place at the Father's right hand was verified by the eyewitness account of Stephen at his death, which is recorded in Acts 7:55. The records of Jesus' words and the testimony of Stephen document the fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 which states Christ is to sit at the right hand of the Father.

3) Scripture says Jesus Christ was perfect. One example is Hebrews 4:15 that declares He was "tempted like we are, yet without sin."

4) The accusations by the religious leaders that Christ sinned did not stand. If Christ had any visible character flaw, the people would have listened to their leaders' charges against Him. If people had seen any sin in Christ, it would have been in their interest to provide, or sell, their testimony as proof

to those who hated Him. There were no valid accusations. The only follower to betray Christ for money provided His location and a positive identification, not an eyewitness testimony to any sin.

5) The multiple "trials" of Christ did not condemn Him for any sin – except what they called blasphemy. The Jewish religious leaders certainly made accusations against Christ many times. Yet accusations do not equal guilt. Only things proven in court establish guilt. When representatives of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, had Christ on trial, they tried to affix false accusations against Him. They even twisted His words to try to say He threatened to personally tear down the Temple.

   Their accusations and absurd charge, as well as the false testimony of others, did not stand. The Sanhedrin's representatives at the home of Annas found Christ guilty of one thing and one thing only. In response to their demand, Christ acknowledged He was the "Son of God." Remember the question of the high priest, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:61).

   In Jewish culture, to dare to claim to be the "Son of God" was to make oneself equal to God. In their society, a son carried his father's authority and represented him even as the father lived. Unless a father said otherwise, a first-born son was to eventually step into the father's position, caring for the family. He was to become leader of the family or clan in every respect, including spiritual responsibility and military leadership. Jesus' claim to be the "Son of God" was why the religious leaders asserted blasphemy.

   Truly, if Christ was not the "Son of God" He did commit blasphemy. First, Christ did say He had the

authority to do things only God could do, including forgive sins recorded in Matthew 9:6. Second, He had used the self-identification of God - "I Am" – from Exodus 3:14, to describe Himself. He did so when he said, "before Abraham was born, 'I Am'" as recorded in John 8:58. Third, Christ declared He was the "Son of God" to the faces of His accusers. If Jesus was not the "Son of God," these three claims were blasphemy!

If the high priest's question and Jesus' answer are not understood, Christ's next statement sounds very odd. Correctly understood in context, His next words and the high priest's and council's response make perfect sense:

> *And Jesus said, "I a*[A]*m; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.* (Mark 14:62-64)

The Sanhedrin wanted Jesus Christ killed, but it did not have the authority to place a death sentence on anyone (John 18:31). Judea at the time of Christ was not a *civitas libera* (free city) but rather a "subject territory" under procurators. Only the Roman procurator had the authority of *jus gladii* – the power over life and death.[2] Therefore, the Sanhedrin's "trial" was similar to a grand jury in the United States of America. This grand jury indicted Christ on the charge of blasphemy.

The religious leaders made Christ's offense clear when they spoke to Pilate. They said, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He

made Himself out to be the 'Son of God'" (John 19:7). Yet the actual charge the religious leaders pressed resulting in Jesus' execution was not blasphemy. It was treason.

Jesus Christ was actually tried in two Roman courts that had the power to condemn Him to death. Herod Antipas received Him into his court by transfer from Pontius Pilate.

Herod Antipas placed no accusation or condemnation of guilt upon Jesus Christ. He simply sent Him back to Pilate. To stave off a riot, Pilate pronounced the death sentence the religious leaders wanted. His words, however, ring true even today, "I find no guilt in this man" (Luke 23:4; John 19:4).

6) The judgment of history finds no fault in Jesus Christ. It is true the Talmud and writings of those who hated Jesus Christ and His message have heaped scorn upon Him through the centuries. Yet in addition to Tiberius, whose belief Jesus was a god was mentioned earlier, there are additional unbiased witnesses who provide historical perspective lauding Christ as wise and righteous.

   The following examples were written in the several decades after Christ's Crucifixion testifying to His innocence. Consider this part of a letter written most likely in A.D. 73 from a pagan, Syrian stoic Mara bar Sarapion, to his son who resided in Edessa:

   > What good did it do the Athenians to kill Socrates, for which deed they were punished with famine and pestilence: Or what did it avail the citizens of Samos to burn Pythagoras, since their country was covered over with sand in one moment: Or

> what did it avail the Jews to execute their wise king, since their kingdom was taken from them from that time: For God justly avenged those three wise men. The Athenians died of famine, the Samians were flooded by the sea, the Jews were slaughtered and driven from their kingdom, and live dispersed everywhere. Socrates is not dead, thanks to Plato. Nor is Pythagoras dead: because of the statue of Hera. Nor is the wise king dead: because of the new laws which he has given.[3]

Josephus writes the following:

> Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works - a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named for him, are not extinct at this day.[4]

Perhaps the most powerful declaration of the innocence of Christ was the most immediate. It came from the centurion who supervised the Crucifixion. His words are recorded in Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 as, “Truly this was the Son of God!” Luke records it slightly differently as, “Certainly this man was innocent.” These statements do not refute each other. The second

explains the first. The Jewish leaders charged Christ with blasphemy for saying He was the Son of God. The centurion declared Jesus was the Son of God. Thus, the soldier was asserting Christ's innocence for making that claim. One cannot be justly convicted of making a false claim, if that claim is proven true.

Much more can be said on this subject. Hopefully, these few proofs are sufficient: Christ was no liar and He was not crazy. His accusers could prove no fault in Him, despite their great desire to do so. Jesus Christ was not guilty of sin or any crime as judged by the Father, the Holy Spirit, the people who witnessed His life closest, and even in the courts of Herod and Pilate. He was who He said He was, the Messiah, the sinless Son of God.

Authority is Not the Same as Power

Notice the Father gave Christ the **authority** to lay down His life and to take up His life again. Christ had the **power** in and of Himself as part of the Triune God on Earth. Authority is the legal right to use power. Jesus' authority was demonstrated in the Resurrection. His power was demonstrated through numerous other ways.

Consider what I believe was the greatest demonstration of Jesus' power on Earth. As it has been said, the greatest power is the power to control oneself. Consider the self-control Jesus displayed on the Cross. He could have freed Himself and destroyed His accusers with a whim. Instead, He shows love and forgiveness toward those who had inflicted such disrespect and agony. There have never been more powerful words spoken than:

> *Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.* (Luke 23:34)

The Movement of the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium (face-cloth) of Christ

Skeptics often reject the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin due to a carbon 14 test that has since been rejected by scientists for both its methods, and conclusions.[1] These people assert science reveals the Shroud to be a fraud. This assertion is patently incorrect. Science proves the Shroud as authentic. It is folly to reject items of faith because of "science" when science validates them, as will be discussed.

It has also been asserted that the burial cloth known as the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo both "appeared" in Europe around 1400. This claim is refuted by the historical records marking the movements of both artifacts from Jerusalem to their present locations.

While the Shroud and the Sudarium were located in the same place and touched the same person, their movements through history are separate. As would be expected, they distinctly contain the pollen of plants from the territories through which they were carried. These pollens and other plant evidence prove the Shroud and the Sudarium are genuine, that both originated in first century Israel, and provided testimony to the record of their separate movements from location to location.

Dr. Max Frei was a member of the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP). In his research he identified pollen spores of 58 different plants, many originating only in the areas around Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Edessa.[2] Open air exposures and human contact may have exposed it to pollens from many areas. Nevertheless, the presence of many pollens specific to the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem as well as a large quantity of flowers and plants from Judea, Constantinople, and Edessa corroborates the Shroud's presence in those places at some point. Yet when considering the pollens present on the cloths, the Sudarium provides the better evidence of

authenticity due to its more limited exposure. The Sudarium was carried to far fewer places and had far less public exposure than the Shroud of Turin. Mark Guscin cites Frei by saying:

> Dr. Max Frei analyzed pollen samples taken from the cloth [the Sudarium of Oviedo] and found species typical of Oviedo [Spain], Toledo [Spain], North Africa and Jerusalem. This confirms the historical route [of the Sudarium of Oviedo] described earlier [in Guscin's article]. There was nothing relating the cloth to Constantinople, France, Italy or any other country in Europe.[3]

Again, the pollens contained in both pieces of cloth match the written record of these objects' history and endorse their authenticity. The historical movements of the Shroud of Turin will now be traced, followed by the movements of the Sudarium of Oviedo.

The Movement of the Shroud of Turin

John 20:2 says Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb and we do not know where they have put Him." John then outruns Peter to the tomb, with no doubt Mary lagging behind. The Shroud and the Sudarium were in the tomb when Peter and John the Beloved entered the grave. Seeing the empty shroud jolted John to faith, as was discussed in chapter 19. When Mary arrived and entered the tomb there is no mention of Peter and John still being present. There is also no mention of the pieces of cloth still being in the tomb. If they were still there for Mary to examine, she would likely have at that moment come to believe in the Resurrection as John had, but she did not, as yet, believe. Further, and most telling, rather than being stirred to belief by seeing and considering them, Mary believed Jesus' body was stolen.

It is logical to believe Peter and John took both the Shroud and the Sudarium with them.[4] To leave them behind and risk they would be taken by another is absurd. Scripture makes no further mention of the two cloths which touched the body of Christ. However, there are records external to Scripture providing evidence.

Isodad of Merv, who is reported to have "collected Eastern traditions"[5] says:

> …but they gave the burial linens to Joseph the senator (sic) [Joseph of Arimathea], and it was right that they be returned to him for safekeeping for he was the owner of the tomb, and it was he who brought them for the honor of Jesus. But Simon [Peter] took the sudarium…[6]

Peter kept the smaller item with him. Yet apparently, he and John agreed to return the expensive and now priceless Shroud to the man who loved Christ and purchased the cloth. A great return for the cost of sacrificing his standing among his peers to bury Jesus Christ.

The Shroud was kept in Jerusalem by Joseph of Arimathea and the believers there for roughly two years until it was taken to King Abgar of Edessa in A.D. 30.[7] Eusebius records Thaddeus, one of the 70 disciples mentioned in Luke 10:1, was sent by the Apostle Thomas to deliver the cloth to King Abgar to fulfill a promise history records was made by the Lord. This message is included shortly. Authors Dr. Allen and wife Mary Whanger described the location of ancient Edessa in this way, "…Edessa, which is now the city of Urfa in Turkey but then was the capital of Osrhoene, a small state about four hundred miles north of Jerusalem."[8]

Skeptics reject the possibility of correspondence between King Abgar and Jesus Christ. Some would also reject the

story of the visit by Thaddeus. Yet the presence of the pollens on the Shroud prove it was there. Eusebius and others also document its presence in Edessa. Just because the correspondence is not recorded in Scripture does not mean it did not happen. As John 21:25 says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."

Eusebius' record of the Shroud being sent to Edessa and the correspondence between King Abgar and Christ both have historical support. Copies of the letters contained in Eusebius' work are mentioned in *The Pilgrimage of Etheria*. In this journal written around A.D. 385, Etheria Silvia recorded visiting Edessa, holding and reading the original letters between Abgar and Christ verifying they matched the copies she had already received at her home in Bordeaux.[9]

As mentioned, Thomas had a role in delivering the gospel as well as the Shroud of Turin to Edessa. It is within Christ's character that He would reinforce His message to Thomas to have faith even without seeing, by having him play a key role in rewarding this gentile king who, without seeing, believed! The words of the letter from King Abgar (also known as Abgarus) to Jesus Christ and His response are included here. Eusebius asserts his copies were made from the original documents contained in the archives of Edessa in the fourth century.

Letter from Abgar to Christ:

> Abgarus, ruler of Edessa, to Jesus the excellent Saviour who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greeting (sic). I have heard the reports of thee and of thy cures as performed by thee without medicines or herbs. For it is said that thou makest the blind to see and the lame to walk, that thou cleanest lepers and castest

> out impure spirits and demons, and that thou healest those afflicted with lingering disease, and raise the dead.
>
> And having heard all these things concerning you, I have concluded that one of two things must be true: either you are God, and having come down from heaven you do these things, or else you, who does these things, are the Son of God.
>
> I have therefore written to you to ask you if you would take the trouble to come to me and heal the disease which I have. For I have heard that the Jews are murmuring against you and are plotting to injure you. But I have a very small yet noble city which is great enough for us both.[10]

Letter from Jesus Christ to King Abgar:

> Blessed are you who hast believed in me without having seen me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not believe in me, and that they who have not seen me will believe and be saved. But in regard to what you have written me, that I should come to you, it is necessary for me to fulfill all things here for which I have been sent, and after I have fulfilled them thus to be taken up again to him that sent me. But after I have been taken up I will send to you one of my disciples, that he may heal your disease and give life to you and yours.[11]

In this record of the correspondence, Eusebius stated the visit by Thaddeus occurred in the Seleucid-era year 340. Eusebius recorded years based upon the Seleucid-era calendar in use within his area at that time. Year 340 of that calendar equals A.D. 30 of the Julian or Gregorian calendars.[12]

When Thaddeus arrived, he had "a cloth with an image." This cloth must have been the Shroud as it contains such an image of the Lord and was and is the only such cloth mentioned in Scripture or historical records. The face-cloth, having been removed from the body before the Shroud was tied shut, would not have been on the body during the Resurrection. It was, beyond reasonable doubt, the Resurrection that burned the image into the Shroud. Further, the examination of the Shroud clearly shows the blood from wounds to the head and face were absorbed into the cloth **before** the image was burned into the fibers.[13] Therefore, although the face-cloth did have large blood stains because of how it was used, it did not carry an image of Christ.

After receiving the Shroud, a personal healing after prayer, and the message of the gospel, Abgar, his family, and much of the city converted to Christianity. The Whangers record:

> At that time, almost every city had its own god or goddess, whose statue was placed by the city gate. All travelers entering the city were required to stop there and worship that deity. After Abgar's healing, he had the statue of the city god of Edessa destroyed. In its place, he had mounted above the main city gate a tile bearing the face image found on the Mandylion [the Shroud of Turin] and the inscription "Christ the God He who hopes in thee is never disappointed." As Edessa was one of the cities on the trade routes between the Mediterranean and the Far East, this image and the story of Christ's power became widely known.[14]

After Abgar's death in A.D. 55 he was replaced by a pagan king. This man desired to destroy the cloth and persecuted the Christians in the city.[15] The bishop of the town wisely and promptly hid the Shroud in the city wall

where it remained until a flood destroyed the wall in A.D. 525. Being rediscovered, it remained in the city until A.D. 944 when Romanus I Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, "decided that as his last act in office he would bring the Mandylion to Constantinople, the capital of the Empire."[16]

The Shroud remained in the Christian city of Constantinople until 1204.[17] Then, during the Fourth Crusade, "Christian" Europeans sacked the city of their Eastern Christian brothers.[18] The Shroud was whisked away to keep it from destruction. Until recently the location of the Shroud from 1204 through 1357 could only be determined through logic and deductive reasoning. A work by Ian Wilson presents evidence of where the Shroud of Turin was during this period. Barbara Frale, author and Vatican secret archives historian, says it well: "Ian Wilson's reconstruction is indubitably the one that shows the highest degree of likelihood and probability."[19] This conclusion seems quite well founded. Wilson's work is well reasoned and fascinating. He concludes the Shroud was the object Philip the Fair of France accused the Knights Templar of worshiping.[20]

Misconstruing the action of the knights provided the "justification" Philip the Fair needed to destroy the order on grounds of heresy. This false accusation then provided an excuse to steal their property. The last two known knights of the order were burned at the stake while maintaining a defense of the piety and purity of their order. These martyrs were its Grand Master Jacques de Molay and Geoffrey de Charnay, Master of the Templar's Normandy region.[21]

Although the surname "de Charnay" has several spelling permutations, it was an uncommon last name. In the words of Wilson, it is "moderately likely" the following two men were family: the Geoffrey de Charnay burned at the stake and a younger man, perhaps his grandnephew, who was Geoffrey de Charny. The younger man, Geoffrey de Charny of Lirey France, was the man who possessed the

Shroud after the destruction of the Knights Templar.[22] In 1357 de Charny's recent widow, Jeanne de Vergy, put the Shroud on public display to stave off financial ruin. As mentioned, from 1204 - 1357 the movements of the Shroud could only be ascertained through conjecture. Due to discoveries recently published by Barbara Frale, there is now strong evidence that the Shroud was in the possession of the Knights Templar from 1204 until it was found to be in the hands of the family of the younger de Charny.

Barbara Frale found evidence in sealed Vatican archives confirming Wilson's theory. She uncovered files containing the testimony of Templars who had seen the Shroud.[23] One such testimony of a young French Templar, Arnaut Sabbatier, follows:

> He testified that he was taken to a secret place to which only the brothers of the Temple had access… There, he was shown a long linen cloth on which was impressed the figure of a man, and was told to kiss the feet of the image three times.[24]

The description of the cloth's size and image matches the Shroud of Turin. Frale's discovery confirms Wilson's analysis. It completes the narrative of the Shroud's location and travels from A.D. 30 until 1357. From that point in time, the record of its location is well established.

The surprise display of the Shroud by the widow de Charny in 1357 incurred the wrath of some church officials forcing the family to remove the Shroud from the public eye. Jeanne de Vergy subsequently married Aymon of Geneva, a wealthy nobleman who was the uncle of the future Avignon Pope, Clement VII. Her son, also named Geoffery de Charny (II), negotiated permission from Avignon Pope Clement VII to again put the Shroud on display in 1389. This time the family had the blessing of the (French) Catholic Church. The Shroud, however, was

not referred to as the burial cloth of Christ. Rather, to be politically wise, it was only called an "image of Christ."[25]

Geoffery de Charny (II)'s descendant, Margaret de Charny, passed the Shroud on to the rulers of Italy, the Savoy family, in 1434. In 1578 the Shroud was placed in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, which was built to house it. It has remained there, except briefly to avoid destruction in World War II, until today. Ownership of the Shroud passed to the Vatican in 1983 through the last will and testament of Umberto II, the exiled King of Italy.[26]

The Movement of the Sudarium

The Sudarium is not just an addendum to the Shroud, but a valuable separate piece of evidence verifying the sufferings of Christ. Such was also the case regarding its movements. It was carried along on its own path separate from the Shroud.

It is suggested in the autobiography, now called *Life of Saint Nino of Georgia,* Peter hid the sudarium.[27] It is believed Nino wrote this work in the last year of her life, A.D. 338.[28] If accurate, Peter's hiding place might have become the place history regards as the first recorded location of the Sudarium. It has been widely accepted that the history of the Sudarium of Oviedo is charted from Jerusalem where it was housed in secret until at least A.D. 570. It was then a pilgrim named Antoninus of Piacenz reported it was being kept in the care of seven nuns in the Monastery of St. Mark near Jerusalem on the east side of the Jordon river.[29] This information is recorded in *San Antonio Mártir*.

Between A.D. 570 and A.D. 614, the Sudarium was transported inside a chest carrying various Christian religious relics through Alexandria and North Africa to Spain in advance of the invading Persian armies.[30] Once in Spain, it was carried through or resided for a time in the

cities of Cartagena, Ecija, Seville, and Toledo. From Toledo it was moved in A.D. 718 further north to avoid the invading Muslim forces.[31] For a time, the chest was kept in a cave now called Monsacro, 10 kilometers from Oviedo.[32]

King Alfonso II built a special chapel named "*Camara Santa de Oviedo*" (Holy chamber of Oviedo) to house the chest, which was later incorporated into the Cathedral of Oviedo.[33] On March 14, 1075, the chest was officially opened in the presence of King Alfonso VI and others including El Cid.[34] The Sudarium was included in a list of the relics contained in the chest. This list is recorded in *Codex Valenciennes 99*.[35] In A.D. 1113, the chest was covered with silver plating. On the silver was inscribed the words, "inviting all Christians to venerate this relic which contains the holy blood."[36] The Sudarium remains in a cathedral in the Spanish town of Oviedo from whence its name was drawn.[37]

The fact that the Shroud cannot be replicated by modern science is proof enough of its authenticity. In addition, the historical records of the movement of the Shroud and the Sudarium support that they both were once on the body of Christ. Clearly, it is beyond reasonable doubt the Shroud, supported by the Sudarium, is proof of the power and reality of the Resurrection of Christ. Further, if the research of the Whangers is correct, as it appears to be, the Shroud also adds support to the dating of the Crucifixion in A.D. 28.

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Two Cloths or Three

Do not be confused by the record of a third cloth also called by some a sudarium. This cloth is mentioned by French Bishop Arculf in *Arculfi Relatio de Locis Sanctis, ab Adamanno Scripta.* Arculf's account is later summarized and included within *Ecclesiastical History of the English People.*[38] This third cloth may have indeed touched the body of Christ as it is likely one was used to aid in lowering Jesus' body from the cross. Such a cloth would also have been used to cover the body preventing public view during transport to the grave. Evidence makes it clear the Shroud of Turin was not used for this purpose.[39] This possible third cloth was given to Charles the Great around A.D. 797. It was taken to the abby of St. Cornelius in Compiègne around A.D. 900 where it was visited by many pilgrims. It was ultimately destroyed in the French Revolution.[40]

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By His Stripes We Are Healed
Isaiah 53:5

It is commonly known that Jesus Christ was beaten. Just how badly He was beaten and by whom is revealed by looking at both Scripture and evidence contained on the Shroud of Turin. Barbara Faccini, Ph.D. of the University of Ferrara, Italy provides the following analysis.

The image on the Shroud shows the victim had received blows from three different types of whips. The first type of injury from begin beaten, which comprises about 65% of the marks on the body, was inflicted by large leather straps. There are 170 or

more such individual marks inflicted by many blows. Each blow inflicted produced many stripes as there were strands to the whip. These blows were inflicted by the temple guards after the "trial" at the home of Annas (Luke 22:63).

The second beating was conducted by Roman guards after Pilate's order to scourge Christ (John 19:1). These blows were given by two Roman *flagrum* that had three small spherical objects imbedded within thongs at the end of each *flagrum*. There are approximately 115 individual injuries reflecting 40-60 blows from a *flagrum* with two or three strands. These blows account for most of the damage to the victim from stripes, but only about 35% of the marks from beatings on the body.

The third whipping Christ received was customarily administered to victims on the way to their crucifixion. They were given by the soldiers with responsibility to drive the victims onward to the location of their execution. As the victim carried the beam of their cross on their shoulders, the guards would strike the back of their calves to drive them onward. These blows were administered with a device made of "a bunch of thin flexible rods or rigid leather cords." The marks from this device represent less than 1% of the blows to the body. These stripes were received on the way to Golgotha.

The information above is derived from Dr. Faccini's article: *Scourge bloodstains on the Turin Shroud: an evidence for different instruments used*, University of Ferrara, Italy.

www.ohioshroudconference.com/papers/p19.pdf

Christmas Dates Errantly Attached to Hippolytus

Hippolytus is celebrated by many as the first to document December 25th as the birth date of Christ. Yet both the date and its attribution to Hippolytus are wrong. December 25th was actually the second date for Christ's birth others attached to the writings of Hippolytus. April 2nd was the first date falsely attached to Hippolytus. As mentioned in chapter 1, April 2nd corresponds to 7 *Nisan* of the year 1 B.C. Eventually, the Church adopted December 25th as the birth date of Christ due to distortions again descending from 7 *Nisan*.

Hippolytus had a reputation of being one who would not compromise what he believed. Such a reputation would be useful for those wishing to propagandize. The evidence leaves little doubt both April 2nd and December 25th were attached to Hippolytus as an effort to use his reputation to buttress dates Church leaders supported at different points in history.

Both April 2nd and December 25th are found at the same point in copies of Hippolytus' Daniel 9 commentary (book 4, section 23). Copies still exist of this section of Hippolytus' work that state three different positions regarding the birth of Christ. While all three attempts to interpose desired dating are different, and one even refutes the others, they all do point to the same fourth conclusion; they were scribal insertions. Here are the three positions:

1) Codex "A" in the library of the Monastery of Vatopedi has the date April 2nd for the birth of Christ.[1]

2) Some copies of Daniel's commentary assert a year for the birth of Christ without offering a specific date. Most present the year of Christ's birth recorded as "5500" from Adam and creation. This

year, clearly taught by Africanus, may or may not have been supported by Hippolytus.[2] Some copies of Daniel's commentary have years that were probably scribal errors altering "5500."[3]

3) Some copies of Daniel's commentary have both the year "5500" as well as the date December 25th.[4]

The copies still in existence and quotations of the Daniel commentary date from the 7th century forward, 500 years after Hippolytus' original.[5] The most likely explanation is the original did not contain **any** of the three pieces of dating information: a April 2nd birth date, an asserted year of birth, or a year of suggested birth along with the promotion of the date December 25th. Scribal insertion would account for the presence of all these assertions on these copies.

Before considering which of these inserted dates came first and why they appeared, Hippolytus' probable beliefs concerning the birthday of Christ should be evaluated. There is no reason to doubt Hippolytus was firmly in the camp of his mentor, Irenaeus, who respected the Jewish dating of Passion Week. It is illogical to believe Hippolytus would take positions that were a direct refutation of his mentor. Irenaeus no doubt passed on to Hippolytus what had been taught to him by Polycarp who was instructed by John the Beloved: that the Hebrew calendar **dates** of the events of Passion Week were important and not **the day of the week** upon which the events fell in any given year.

As stated in chapter one, it is logical to believe Hippolytus passed on the 7 *Nisan* birth date of Christ to Origen and Africanus. Hippolytus would have accepted the Wednesday, 14 *Nisan* dating of the Crucifixion as that information was embraced until the end of the third century, more than 50 years after Hippolytus' death. (The transition to a Friday Crucifixion was discussed in some detail in chapter 17.) Hippolytus would have also

accepted the statement of Christ that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights, another position universally held until late in the third century.

Analysis based on historical evidence suggests the April 2nd date was attached to Hippolytus before it was replaced by December 25th. The April 2nd date occurs in Codex "A", a corrupted Hippolytus Daniel commentary, and April 2nd is also found on the base of Hippolytus' statue on display at the Vatican library. This statue was unearthed in 1551 in a cemetery where Hippolytus was buried.[6]

The information on the base of the statue seems to reflect a "layer" that may be rooted in Hippolytus' teachings. Because Hippolytus' mentor, Irenaeus, respected the Jewish roots of the faith, he labored to keep Western Church and their day-of-the-week orientation using the Julian calendar united with the Eastern Church and their Hebrew-calendar-date orientation. It is logical to believe Hippolytus would have continued in his mentor's efforts.

One of two things seems true: either Hippolytus had attempted to adjust Easter celebrations from the Hebrew lunar calendar to the Julian solar calendar and some of his efforts were reflected on the base; or a scribe used Hippolytus' reputation to promote this effort. Nevertheless, the statue contains information from at least two sources.[7] Maybe some of the information came from Hippolytus' teachings, but at least some of the information absolutely did not.

Clearly, at least most of the information on the statue's base came from positions drafted over 50 years after Hippolytus' death. Moreover, it does not seem possible to discern Hippolytus' position regarding the birth date of Christ from the statue for several reasons:

1) The spacing of the information on the statue makes it obvious it was added after the initial creation of the statue. It resembles poorly

written class notes, where information is crammed into margins after the lecture is over, rather than the work of a skilled artist.

2) Although the information on the statue presents a yearly Paschal dating calendar reflecting a 14 *Nisan* Crucifixion, the statue wrongly asserts the Resurrection was two days after that date, a position that did not appear until decades after Hippolytus' death. Further, one of the twelve insertions in the day of the week columns on the statue specifies the Crucifixion was on the sixth day of the week. While debatable when a Friday Crucifixion evolved, its first clear written appearance is again several decades after Hippolytus' demise.

3) Even if the information added to the statue's base had been simultaneously produced with the statue's completion, it could not have been produced until decades after Hippolytus' death c. A.D. 235. A statue of a theologian/religious leader certainly would not have been produced within the empire before Constantine came to power in A.D 306, who brought Christianity into full acceptance. Celebrating a banned religion by commemorating one of its leaders would have gotten the sculptor killed.

One should ask why these particular insertions were made. The development of the Church's position regarding the celebration of the Resurrection provides the answer. At the Council of Nicaea, Emperor Constantine promulgated the demand the Church entirely abandon Jewish Paschal dating. Constantine had further stated in his formal letter, which appears in this text, that the dating he suggested was passed down to the Church by the ancient fathers. There was no evidence supporting this assertion in the writings of the Church fathers, as it was not true!

Nevertheless, rulers do not like to be wrong. It no doubt became the obligation of some to propagandize according to the emperor's positions and wishes. The dating information on the Hippolytus statue seems to be an attempt at revisionist history to establish a defense of the emperor's historically unsupported statement. The dating engraved on the statue's base is obviously there to support the Friday Crucifixion position and Roman dating developed after the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325.

By the early fourth century, Hippolytus was regarded as a renegade by some within the Church for opposing papal power. Yet his reputation for regarding the Jewish roots of the church, as discussed, and his reputation for being a man of conviction even against papal power were clearly useful. If those who valued the Jewish dating of Passion Week, and therefore rejected top-down church authority, could be persuaded that even Hippolytus had accepted Roman timing, they might become more compliant. Thus, it seems this statue was created or modified as a tool to aid in the unification of the Resurrection timing of churches throughout the empire. It is a reasonable assumption the addition of the same date for Christ's birth on the base of the statue, April 2nd, was added to copies of Hippolytus' Daniel commentary, like Codex "A," for the same reason.

Before the end of the fourth century, the battle against those who embraced the Jewish dating of Passion Week was over. Those who had not adopted the timing of the emperor, and the council he heavily influenced, had been declared heretics and the Church had moved on. The date of April 2nd served no purpose to the Church as it was replaced by a more convenient date.

With the shift to a new date, the old date reflected on the statue's base would have been a distraction. Thus, the desire to push a new December 25th date likely provided the reason to literally bury the April 2nd date that was on the base of the statue. The April 2nd dating on copies of

Hippolytus' Daniel commentary also had to go. Copies may have been altered. It is also possible the April 2nd date disappeared as that information was not copied on newer manuscripts and the older ones with that date disintegrated over time.

During Hippolytus' lifetime church fathers believed Christ was born in between "about 4 B.C." (Irenaeus)[8] and 2 B.C. (Tertullian)[9]. April 2nd points to 1 B.C. The April 2nd date was then replaced by December 25th. Again, both of these dates can be traced to 7 *Nisan* as shown in the appendix, "**Insertions to Clement of Alexandria's Stromata and the Source of Armenia's January 6th Christmas**." They should not be attributed to Hippolytus.

It is this writer's conclusion Hippolytus' position regarding the birth of Christ **cannot be directly ascertained** from documents that have been discovered. In the absence of dating information that can clearly be attributed to Hippolytus, it is reasonable to believe Hippolytus passed along the 7 *Nisan* dating as discussed at the beginning of this text.

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Secular History
Censuses and Oaths

A Roman census/registration served four purposes. First, it was a periodic check of the morality within the empire as judged by the "censor" who was the individual responsible for the census.[1] Ironically, emperors who were among the most immoral individuals within the empire had the authority to judge the morals of their citizens. Second, a census was used to establish liability for military service.[2] Third, it was used to gather demographic and financial information for taxation. A taxpayer needed to be placed in his family ancestry with his wife and children listed, so he could be properly identified along with his dependents and have the appropriate taxation received.[3] The fourth purpose of registration, or any Roman tax for that matter, was to give citizens the "opportunity" to confess themselves and their family to be loyal subjects of Rome and acknowledge its authority over them.[4] A registration, therefore, included an oath residents of the empire were forced to recite that declared their loyalty and submission to the emperor and other people or gods for which Rome demanded obeisance.

The existence and offense of loyalty oaths has been lost to most within the Church. Because of the freedoms enjoyed for so long in much of the world, consideration is not given to how difficult it would have been to remain both faithful to God and faultless in the eyes of the state.

In 8 B.C. Ceasar Augustus declared a census. The loyalty oath to him and his family of that census carried additional importance because on March 6 of 12 B.C. he had himself declared Pontifex Maximus.[5] The word "pontifex" appears to be the merger of two Latin words meaning "bridge" and "builder" and "maximus" means "greatest." This title made him head of the Roman State religion, carrying with it the implied authority over all religious expression within the empire. The title was a

declaration that the emperor stood as the intermediary between god(s) and mankind.

Those with an eye for theological meanings should recognize the blasphemous parallel between Augustus' actions and those the antichrist of the last days will take. Three to four years after Augustus' claim to be the bridge-builder between God and man, Jesus would be born. Christ was One who, because of God's loving sacrifice, would become the true Bridge-builder between God and mankind. This writer believes the antichrist will parallel this action during the middle of a week that is the Feast of Tabernacles, three-and-a-half years into the seven-year tribulation period. At that point, the antichrist will attempt to supplant Jesus' return in power by claiming to be the all-powerful one to be worshipped. (See *The Return of Jesus the Messiah* by this author.) This census, with its religious overtones, was the one that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in 5 B.C. (Augustus followed the ambitious move to be called what meant "Greatest Bridge Builder" a decade later by permitting the Senate to refer to him as the "father of the Roman people" on February 5 of 2 B.C.[6])

Oaths were also required of residents when a territory was incorporated within the empire directly as part of a province. Lily R. Taylor states, "When Paphlagonia was incorporated in the province of Galatia in 6 B.C., all the inhabitants, both native and Roman citizens, were forced to take an oath of allegiance of a prescribed form that must have come from the governor of the province or his deputies."[7] Taylor points out that within this province, the oath was demanded first of delegated leaders from the cities within the region before all the residents were required to follow suit.[8]

This protocol suggests this oath was not attached to the empire-wide census of 6/5 B.C. Nevertheless, some incorrectly believe the Paphlagonia oath was possibly demanded within that area as part of an empire-wide

census ordered by Augustus to obtain subjection to him as the "father of the Roman people."[9]

Some believe the census involving Joseph and Mary's trip to Bethlehem was later than 5 B.C. and suggest they were compelled to take their trip because of a "father of the Roman people" oath.[10] Please don't be confused by these suggestions. Both the census referred to in Luke that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in 5 B.C. and the Paphlagonia oath, which was finally administered to the people in that area in 3 B.C.,[11] were before Augustus took the title of "father of the Roman people" in 2 B.C.

Further, there is a major difference between the title "father of the Roman people" and "Pontifex Maximus." The title, "father of the Roman people," while psychologically very significant, had no real authority attached to it. The title "Pontifex Maximus" represented formal investment of great power in a society that sought omens from the gods in making major decisions. Only one of these titles, Pontifex Maximus, was apparently weighty enough to merit an empire-wide loyalty oath, as the timing does not seem to be coincidental to this writer.

Some suggest the oath required during the census in Israel shortly before Herod the Great's death in 4 B.C. was the doing of Herod himself.[12] E. Mary Smallwood suggests the oath was instigated of Herod the Great in order to restore himself in the eyes of Augustus. She says, "Now, late in his reign but possibly before his reconciliation with Augustus, Herod required his subjects to take an oath of allegiance to himself and the emperor jointly."[13] However, since the census was ordered by Caesar Augustus, not his lackey, and because it was ordered in 8 B.C. not 4 B.C., this theory lacks support.

Nevertheless, an expression of loyalty to a "king" who was appointed by the emperor was by extension loyalty to the emperor. History records such a linkage between Caesar and Herod the Great within the census oath in Israel. The

loyalty oath required shortly before Herod the Great's death and likely associated with the census implemented in 6-5 B.C., is mentioned in Josephus' writings. Josephus recorded that the oath required the Jews to give "assurance of their good will to Caesar, and to the king's government."[14] The reference to "the king's government" was a requirement for the Jews to declare loyalty to Herod the Great whose acts of insanity had made him both feared and hated by most Jews.

The oath was naturally offensive to many Jews. Josephus records that, along with the Essenes who were always excused by Herod the Great from making oaths due to their theology,[15] 6,000 Pharisees refused to take the oath and were fined for their belligerence.[16]

Josephus provides another interesting point to support census taking within Israel. He mentions the existence of a provincial Roman census official there during the first century A.D.[17]

Also interesting, it is likely the oaths within regions were adapted to cite the deity worshiped in the area as a witness to the oath along with "divine" Caesar. There could have been some allowance made for the religious sensitivities of the Jews. There is evidence this possibility exists since Rome had already allowed that, in the case of the Jews, "they were permitted to make prayers not to him (Augustus) but for his safety."[18] Perhaps this allowance was reflected in the census oath Jesus' adopted father, Joseph, would have been expected to make.

Hopefully the Jews were spared from the offensive oath that people from other areas were required to make. Yet even if reference to God replaced references to false gods, including Augustus' name as a deity in an oath would have been anathema to faithful Jews. (It would also be odious to most Jews to verbalize loyalty to the detested Herod the Great.) To evaluate the offense such an oath could have caused the Jews, consider the following oath

demanded of the residents of Paphlagonia at Gangra in 3 B.C.:

> I swear by Jupiter, Earth, Sun, by all the gods and goddesses, and by Augustus himself, that I will be loyal to Caesar Augustus and to his children and descendants all my life in word, in deed and in thought, regarding as friends whomever they so regard, and considering as enemies whomever they so adjudge; that in defense of their interests I will spare neither body, soul, life, nor children, but will in every way undergo every danger in defense of their interests; that whenever I perceive or hear anything being said or planned or done against them I will lodge information about this and will be an enemy to whoever says or plans or does any such thing; and that whomever they adjudge to be enemies I will by land and sea, with weapons and sword, pursue and punish. But if I do anything contrary to this oath or not in conformity with what I swore, I myself call down upon myself, my body, my soul, my life, my children, and all my family and property, utter ruin and utter destruction unto all my issue and all my descendants, and may neither earth nor sea receive the bodies of my family or my descendants, or yield fruits to them.[19]

It is doubtful the oath of Paphlagonia taken upon its merger into Galatia was identical to the oath taken in Israel either in the empire-wide census of 6/5 B.C. or the oath taken in the next census in A.D. 6, when the "Kingdom of Judah" was formally absorbed into the Syrian region. However, the oaths were close in time to the oath of Paphlagonia and could very well have been similar. It could specifically be argued, since the Paphlagonian oath was also administered upon a "kingdom" becoming part of a province that it could have been similar.

Justin Martyr preserved some fascinating information for history. In his letter to Emperor Antoninus Pius, his sons, and the Roman Senate, Justin Martyr first makes the case Jesus Christ was the prophesied Messiah.[20] Then, he makes a point about a registration document that still existed. He states the registration for the tax included Jesus' name on it! This humble but bold church father is doing this to assert the loyalty of Jesus' family to Rome. If, therefore, Jesus was the son of a loyal subject who listed his family and signed the registry and took the oath, then by implication, Jesus Christ would have been a loyal subject as well. Further, the extension could be made that His teachings and His followers were loyal and no threat to the empire.

In addition to verifying that Joseph was no rebel, providing one of the proofs which refute a contemporary theory he died in a revolt centered in Nazareth, Justin Martyr's testimony verifies Joseph's adoption of Jesus Christ under Roman law. This letter about the registry was a document dating to only slightly more than 100 years after the census. His letter proves the original registration form still existed and could be readily seen and verified at that time.

Here is Justin Martyr's quote:

> ... and hear what part of earth he was to be born in, as another prophet, Micah, foretold. He spoke thus: "And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come forth a Governor, who shall feed My people." Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius [alternate spelling of Quirinius], your first procurator in Judaea.[21]

Justin Martyr's letter does not refer to the census conducted during Christ's birth, as some assume. Jesus' name would not have appeared on the census registry for that census. [22] Jesus Christ had not been born by the last day of the census year, the date of declaration, thus he would not have been listed. As noted earlier, the date of declaration was the last day of the year before the reporting year when the registration occurred. However, such a birth after a census would result in the inclusion of that child's name, often by a special note, in the next census.[23] Therefore, Justin Martyr was not referring to the census of 6/5 B.C. He was, however, providing proof of Joseph's participation in the next census of A.D. 6, which would also have required a trip to Bethlehem.

Robert Boyd provides an example of the customary special note made on a report of a child born between two censuses. Here is the quote from his book:

> "To Arius, son of Lysimachus..." He then lists his parents and their parents who are inhabitants of his village. Then he registers his son: "I register Pakebkis, the son born to me and my wife, Taasies, daughter of... and Taopis in the 10th year of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator, and request that the name of my aforesaid son Pakebis [sic] be entered on the list."[24]

Please note, the 10th year of Tiberius was A.D. 21 or 22, when one counts the co-regency of Tiberius with Augustus. If one prefers to count from the death of Augustus, then it would be A.D. 23 or 24. The birth of Pakebkis was after the census of A.D. 14, which Augustus mentions as his last census in his journal, and apparently before or as the next census occurred.

The name of the Savior, most likely appearing in its long form, *Yehoshua*, although perhaps as *Yoshua* or *Yeshua*, would have been legally required on the family's record in

the A.D. 6 census, as Justin Martyr recorded. As has been extensively examined in this book, Cyrenius, also called Quirinius, had the title some translate into English as "Governor of Syria," during both the birth census done in 6/5 B.C. and the later census of A.D. 6. Clearly, Justin Martyr's letter provides documentation of the accuracy of God's Word regarding the birth of Christ, Quirinius leading two census, and Joseph's participation in the oath demanded of the residents of the region in A.D. 6.

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Avoiding the Trap of the Enemy

Hopefully, the oath required of Joseph and the Jews took into consideration their religion. Declaring a loyalty oath to Augustus similar to the one used in Paphlagonia would have been horrible. While there is evidence Joseph took the oath of A.D. 6. Perhaps Joseph found a way out of making the oath of 6/5 B.C. Joseph's sensibilities were likely no less stringent than the 6,000 Pharisees who refused the oath of 6/5 B.C.

Perhaps, since Joseph had a year to complete the census of 6/5 B.C., the family's escape to Egypt could have saved Joseph from stating loyalty to "the king's government," which would include Herod the Great. More importantly, the trip may have also protected Joseph from a detestable statement of loyalty to Augustus as "Pontifex Maximus" and likely deity. One factor suggests speculation. Perhaps, Joseph's name not appearing on the 6/5 B.C. registry was a reason God directed Joseph not to stay in Judea when he returned from Egypt with the family.

It probably would have been an easy thing to check the register for his name, since a copy of it was likely stored locally.[25] If someone noticed his name did not appear on the registry, it would have branded him as a rebel and a threat to Rome and to Herod's son, Archelaus, who was then the ruler of the territory of Judea. Perhaps concern about his name not appearing on the role for the 6/5 B.C. census was part of why he was afraid to return to Judea (Matthew 2:22). Avoiding the region would lessen the possibility such a check of the record along with the dangers that would accrue would occur.

Herod the Great's Years of Reign and Date of Death

In order to make this appendix easier to digest, it is divided into four sections: the beginning of the reign of Herod the Great, the impossibility of Herod's death in early 4 B.C. due to time limitations presented by known historical events, the impossibility of Herod's death in early 4 B.C. due to the historical evidence regarding his personal customs and health record, the precise date of Herod's death provided through historical documentation.

The Beginning of the Reign of Herod the Great

The beginning of the reign of Herod the Great is not a limiting factor regarding the dating of the birth of Christ. No scholar suggests the birth of Christ could be before 8 B.C., and Herod the Great's reign pre-dates 8 B.C. by decades.

The start of Herod's reign is important because it must be identified to define when the Temple's construction began as it is documented in two of Josephus' works. The starting point of the Temple's construction can in turn be used to define when Jesus' conversation with the religious leaders occurred. Dating this conversation recorded in John 2:18-21 identifies the year Christ's ministry began which was discussed in the chapter "**A Date Stamp Posted in the New Testament**."

Some mark the inception of the reign of Herod the Great as July 37 B.C. when he, along with help from Roman General Sossius, defeated Antigonus II Mattathias, the last Hasmonean (Maccabean) leader, and took Jerusalem.[1] However, the beginning of Herod's reign is actually the week of September 19-26, 40 B.C. when he was named king by Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) and installed by the Senate. Josephus provides crucial information when he says,

> Antony [sic] also feasted Herod the first day of his reign. And thus did this man [Herod] receive the kingdom, having obtained it on the hundred and eighty-fourth Olympiad, when Caius Domithis Calvinus was consul the second time, and Caius Asinius Pollio (the first time).[2]

There are a couple of concerns raised about Josephus' description of when Herod the Great's reign began.[3] It has been questioned by some and completely rejected by others. The problems are twofold. First, the fourth and final year of the 184 Olympiad was indeed 40 B.C., which by the Greek calendar ended June 30, 40 B.C. The critics of Josephus are mistaken at this point because the Greek calendar is not the correct calendar to use when analyzing Josephus' statement. The Greek calendar did not define the correct months for the final year of the 184th Olympiad in the Syrian Province.

Although much more is said about calendars in the appendix: "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars**," some brief remarks here may be helpful. Each Olympiad was a four-year period. The individual Olympiad years, as they were defined in Rome and much of the empire, were indeed from July 1 one year through June 30 of the next year. This schedule was not, however, the case universally. In the areas dominated by Babylonian calendars, the marking of years, including years using the Olympiad designation system, started and ended near the spring equinox. In areas dominated by the Syrian-Macedonian calendar, including Israel, the civil year began and ended near the fall equinox. This marking of years in the Syrian-Macedonain region included references using Olympiad designations.[4]

Understanding Josephus' calendar references, and for that matter, how calendars were used throughout Israel, can be very confusing. Whereas the civic calendar began in the fall since, according to tradition, the time of King

David. The religious calendar used by the Jews, since the time of the exodus from Egypt, started in the spring as did the Babylon calendar.[5] Some say the Jewish spring religious calendar was adopted during the time the Jews spent in captivity in Babylon. However, Josephus noted, as Scripture records, that Moses instituted a spring-oriented calendar by God's command since it was in the spring when Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage.[6] Both the spring religious calendar and the fall civic calendar continue in use by the Jewish people.

A student of Josephus' works will further note he sometimes uses Olympiad dating as a secondary delimiter to specify an important date. This double-dating is used, for example, to record Antiochus' robbing and corrupting worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. For this particular event, Josephus verified its dating by double marking the event by using both dating based upon the Seleucid Kingdom ruled by Antiochus and dating based upon the Olympiad system. Since Antiochus' actions involved the Temple and religious obligations, Josephus used the spring or Babylonian calendar in this case, for the inception of the years with the two dating systems.[7]

The beginning of Herod the Great's reign is also of great importance. It mattered not just to Roman governance, but to Israel specifically. Therefore, it is very understandable Josephus would again use double-dating. Here Josephus used both the common Roman means to designate a year by citing the two consuls in office that year and by using Olympiad dating to verify the year and to narrow the time specified.

Since Herod's appointment was a governmental action, Josephus used the Hebrew or Macedonian calendar system with its start in the fall in this case. By those calendars, the new year began with the first day of the month *Dios*[8] (*Tishrei* by the Hebrew calendar) or September 30 in 40 B.C.[9] As will be shown, the inauguration of Herod the Great was between September

19-26 of September 40 B.C. Since it was before 1 *Tishrei* started the evening of September 29 of 40 B.C., it was in fact just before the end of the last year of the 184th Olympiad. This analysis proves Josephus correct concerning the Olympiad dating of the inception of the reign of Herod the Great.

The second challenge made to Josephus' dating was with the consuls listed. The two consuls Josephus mentions as being in power when Herod the Great's reign began were added as replacements for two who had picked the wrong side of a civil conflict and lost their seats. It seems clear the two replacement consuls began concurrent with the agreement of the Treaty of Brundisium.[10] The Treaty of Brundisium was enacted by the Senate. This body could not have been in session without the leadership of the new consuls.

The Treaty was implemented in mid-September, just before Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) both returned to Rome. Mark Antony and Octavian were already in Rome when Herod the Great arrived. Further, the recommendation of Mark Antony to make Herod the Great king in Israel was received by the Senate and put into the formal records. These facts make for a clear line of reasoning. It is entirely logical one of the first acts of the Senate, when they convened after the turmoil, would have been to seat the two replacements for the two consuls who had been ousted earlier in the year. Josephus was, therefore, correct in who the two consuls were for the year (at least what remained of it) when Herod the Great began to reign. Thus, Josephus' double dating of the start of Herod the Great's reign was very precise and quite correct on both Olympiad dating and Roman consul dating. By using these two dating systems, Josephus narrowed the dating of Herod's reign to a very tight time frame.

If uncomfortable with this analysis, there is other evidence supporting this position. Historian Edward Greswell stated what is commonly held, Herod the Great was appointed in

40 B.C. With great care, Greswell presented several pieces of information narrowing the date range to the one week period in September when it occurred.[11] Since his work is not easily obtained, and because it is so masterful on this subject, several of his points are listed here along with his footnoting so posterity can be satisfied as to his accuracy and the accuracy of this text that relies on him at this point. The following five paragraphs are quotes of Greswell, except for the short definitions inserted within braces. Citations of other works Greswell used to buttress his statements and the proof of his information are inserted within his quote as footnotes. Greswell wrote:

> First; the irruption [*to rush in forcefully and disrupt*] of the Parthians, which took place U.C.714[12] [40 B.C.] took place between the Passover and the Pentecost of that year[13]: and consequently the departure of Herod to Rome[14] which was soon after the irruption, was soon after the feast of Pentecost. The time of his departure, therefore, was mid-summer, U.C. 714; and it agrees with the same conclusion, that when Herod left Egypt [on his way from Israel to Rome], the civil wars in Italy were known to be at their height.
>
> Again: when he arrived at Brundisium both Antony [sic] and Caesar were at Rome. But they were not at Rome, U.C. 714 [40 B.C.], until after the peace of Brundisium, concluded the same year...."[15]
>
> Secondly: it was during the *Hippodromia* [horse or chariot race] or *Ludi Circenses* [athletic games presented in the *Circus Maximus* - a large arena]; that is, between September 15 - 19.[16] All these events, both the peace with Antony; the expected arrival of the corn-ships; the celebration of the games; and the news of the renewal of hostilities by

Sextus Pompeius; are mentioned by Dio and Appian as nearly coincident....

Again; it appears from Dio, that from a time after their arrival, especially during the *Ludi Circenses*, there were great disturbances at Rome; by which the life of Augustus himself was once seriously endangered.[17] Nor did these disturbances cease until people had carried their point; which was to oblige Antony and Augustus to make peace with Sextus Pompeius [sic - sentence structure]. I think it is clear from the account of Josephus that these commotions were over at the time of the arrival of Herod. If so, he did not arrive until after the *Ludi Circenses*; that is until after September 19, in this year. Accordingly, about the third week in September I place the precise time of his arrival; which would thus coincide with the celebration of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles; for that began U.C. 714 [40 B.C.], on September 14. And as he was detained only seven days in all,[18] after arrival before his departure, the anniversary of his appointment would necessarily fall almost every year about the time of this Feast...[19] I think it is a striking confirmation of the same conclusion, that during the time of his absence the siege of Masada was going on, not only through the heat of the summer, but exactly until the recurrence of the autumnal rains; the period of which in Judea was commonly about a month later then the feast of Tabernacles. Rain in such quantities, at once, as to fill the reservoirs of the besieged in a single night, could never have set in, in Judea, before the end of October, or beginning of November."[20]

Many theologians dispute 40 B.C. as the year Herod began his reign because at that point likely parts of Galilee and all of Judea were not under his control. He did not solidify his territory by gaining control over Jerusalem and Judea until July 37 B.C. Their position is understandable, as it was indeed when Herod gained control of the entire domain allotted to him by Rome. However, it does not reflect the true start of his reign as defined by his appointment as "king" with authority from the rulers of the Roman Empire.

As was his practice, Josephus was very precise in identifying Herod the Great's reign. Josephus' description of the end of his reign confirms what he considered to be the beginning of Herod's reign. He documents this information by stating Herod died in his 37th year of reign and his 34th after procuring the execution of Antigonus II Mattathias, the enemy he defeated to take Jerusalem and who he sent immediately to Rome to be put to death.[21] Therefore, Josephus did not regard the conquest of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. as the starting point of Herod's reign. Rather he identified it as beginning three years earlier in 40 B.C.

One might ask if the Pharisees regarded the start of the temple's construction with the same dating as Josephus. Most scholars regard Josephus himself as being a Pharisee. At least he was closely aligned to them. There is no reason to believe the Pharisees counted Herod's reign and the start of the temple's construction differently, nor does the Gospel writer suggest any alternate understanding of the temple's construction timing from the norm. John 2:19-20 simply records the Pharisees said 46 years of the work on the Temple had been accomplished when they were speaking with Christ.

The Impossibility of Herod's Death in Early 4 B.C. Due to Time Limitations Presented by Known Historical Events

Having discerned when Herod the Great's reign began, it would seem obvious it ended with his demise. Yet determining that date also has its challenges. The majority of scholars hold to a date in March/April 4 B.C. for his death. A small group believe he died in 5 B.C. Others point to 1 B.C as the year of Herod the Great's death. For this study, the matter is moot. None of these points conflict with the chronology presented in this text. Christ's birth date has been determined based upon other information without the necessity of using the demise of Herod the Great as an end marker limiting when the magi could have visited Bethlehem.

Nevertheless, many who have attempted a chronology of Christ and His ministry have attempted to pin down the date of death of Herod the Great. With few exceptions, their efforts have produced erroneous results. Since providing the fruits of the research for this book may save others from effort, Herod's date of death is offered here for those curious.

The information identifying the date of death of Herod the Great is available almost entirely from Josephus. His historical accounts are so respected and widely accepted as factually accurate, they are not usually questioned. With regard to the dating of the death of Herod a problem arises due to errors in understanding his specificity producing the mistaken perception his words are self-contradictory.

Much of Josephus' material providing dating information on the death of Herod the Great comes from sections of two of his works: *Antiquities of the Jews* 17, 6, 2-4 and *Wars of the Jews* 1, 33, 2-4. Virtually all the data for the following list of items comes from these two sections of Josephus, therefore they will not be individually footnoted.

In these sections of his two major works Josephus says the following things occurred before and soon after the death of Herod the Great. Each provides information which is relevant to the chronology:

1) A rumor of his failing health prompted the High Priest Matthias, son of Margalothus, and Judas, son of Saripheus, to incite a large number of young men, who were their students, to tear down a golden eagle that had been erected by Herod over the great gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. Approximately 40 of these young men were captured along with Matthias and Judas and brought before the people by Herod for judgment on their "sacrilege." The offense was not the sacrilege of having erected the image of a false god on the Temple of YHWH, the one true God, but rather, the "sacrilege" of pulling down an object that represented the deity of Caesar, a god of the Roman Empire. Josephus records the insurrection, resulting from Herod the Great's failing health, this way, "These men, when they found that the king's distemper was incurable, excited the young men that they would pull down all those works which the king had erected contrary to the law of their fathers..."[22]

2) Matthias, Judas and the youths who dared to speak out because of their pride and delight in their actions are held to be burned at the stake. Josephus records their horrific death saying,

> Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias... that very day which the Jews observed as a fast... Herod... burnt (the now deposed high priest) Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon.[23]

3) After the public trial, the youths who kept their mouths shut were granted at the pleading of the people a mercifully quick death sentence, which seems to have been carried out immediately by the Roman officers present. This act of "mercy" is recorded in *Wars of the Jews*, "[Herod the Great] ordered those that had let themselves down [by apparently being verbally defiant], together with their rabbis, to be burnt alive; but delivered the rest that were caught to the proper officers to be put to death by them."[24]

4) The date of their burning coincides with a day of fasting before a feast/holy day.

5) The night after the fast day there was a lunar eclipse visible in Jerusalem.

6) After the eclipse, the following things happen to or are done by Herod the Great up until his death:

- His physical condition begins to deteriorate, causing him to go to his retreat in Jericho.

- He seeks the counsel of physicians.

- The doctors direct him to travel to and bathe in natural springs on the north end of the Dead Sea.

- After obeying the doctors, he travels back to Jericho.

- The doctors then suggest oil baths, which he tries with no benefit.

- He despairs of life and attempts suicide.

- He is informed his imprisoned son, who thinks

his suicide attempt was successful, does not sorrow but rather tries to take immediate charge of the kingdom.

- Herod, who is furious, sends a message to Rome requesting permission to execute his son.

- Herod receives permission from Rome to kill his son, which he immediately orders.

- Since he just killed his heir, he rewrites his will requesting Rome give his kingdom to others.

- He orders the gathering to Jericho of 60 innocent Jewish men from all over the country. These men were respected leaders whom he ordered to be executed when he died.

Josephus specifically identified the year Herod the Great died in his two major works with these words:

> When he had done these things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater [his son] to be slain, having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven.[25]

> So Herod, having survived the slaughter of his son five days, died, having reigned thirty-four years, since he had caused Antigonus to be slain, and obtained his kingdom; but thirty-seven years since he had been made king by the Romans.[26]

Josephus notes the distinction of Herod the Great's beginning to reign over much of Israel as being

different from his rulership over Jerusalem after its conquest and the resulting execution of Antigonus II Mattathias.

7) After Herod the Great dies, the 60 leaders are spared and released against his instructions.

8) A week-long funeral procession and internment occurs, culminating in a feast where his son and new heir, Archelaus, tries unsuccessfully to woo the support of the Jews.

9) The Jews gather in Jerusalem for Passover, rejecting Archelaus' overtures and authority by killing a number of Roman soldiers.

10) Archelaus responds by sending a large force of soldiers who slaughter 3,000 Jews during a sacrifice.

In addition to these 10 points of information, astronomy and the timing of Jewish feasts show there was only one time between 7 B.C. and 1 B.C. when a fast occurred on the day before a lunar eclipse was visible in Israel. That was the fast before the Feast of Purim, March 12/13, 4 B.C. and the lunar eclipse of March 13, 4 B.C. That eclipse establishes the year of Herod's death, which is supported by the majority of scholarship and this author.

There is extensive evidence that the various reigns of Herod the Great's heirs began in 4 B.C. While correct in the year, many incorrectly suggest his successors began their reigns early in the year. This position allows Archelaus' reign to have begun and his massacre to have occurred during Passover in 4 B.C. However, there are problems with this position. It requires all the events listed as 6-8 above to have unfolded during the 29-day period between March 13, 4 B.C. and Passover April 11, 4 B.C. This timing does not seem possible.

Additionally, accepting Herod's death in the spring requires one to dismiss Josephus' record that Herod the Great's death occurred after he reigned 37 years. As of Passover 4 B.C. it would have been no more than 36 years, even by generous regnal dating. (The Jews customarily used nonaccession-year regnal dating which credited a ruler a full-year for the partial year when a king began to rule. This system did not credit the year to the king who had just died. Josephus used this system. For more details see the appendix: "**Crazy Clocks and Calendars.**")

There are others who defend timetables based upon other eclipses also requiring the dismissal of data not suiting their position. These other theories are non-starters as they dismiss the most identifiable piece to the timetable puzzle: the timing of the fast followed by the eclipse.

One minority position holds Herod died in 1 B.C. Some holding this position have raised an objection, suggesting the execution of the high priest and his followers happened on the same day as the act of rebellion and the trial. They suggest if Josephus is to be taken as the majority interpret it, the trial would have been on a holy day and illegal. Therefore, they assert the majority position must be incorrect.[27]

There are several misunderstandings in their logic. The first misunderstanding is this: if these events happened the same day, it was definitely not a holy day. There is no way a high priest would have encouraged the actions of the youth on a holy day, as it would have clearly been considered "work," which was itself illegal. Consider what their actions required: axes, heavy ropes, and hard labor.[28] Their second misunderstanding is this: Josephus does not say it was on the holy day. Rather, he implies it occurred the day before the day a man was appointed to replace Matthias. That replacement served only one day before he was allowed to step down as he claimed he was unclean. Then the next day, another man was appointed

and the executions take place on that day. This new day with a second new high priest was the fast day before the Feast of Purim.[29]

Another assumption of this minority position is that Herod the Great would have avoided burning alive a man he had just stripped of the high priesthood during a religious holiday of the Jews.[30] They believe Herod the Great would have avoided ordering the burning on a national holiday, as it would have been especially odious to the Jews.[31] They propose the executions could have been conducted after the holy day. Not only does this suggestion clearly refute Josephus' record upon which they otherwise depend, it does not make sense. Rather, it is likely Herod chose to have the executions on that date specifically because of a personal vendetta. He knew he did not have long to live, and he would likely have been very willing to take the chance of stirring further revolt. Such further insurrection would have given him more pretext to kill adversaries before his own death.

Although Herod the Great claimed to be a Jew, whose mother was a descendant of priests, he was the son of Antipater the Idumean, the people group called Edomites.[32] The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the jealous older brother of Jacob, the father of the Jews. Esau was not only Herod the Great's direct ancestor; he was also the direct ancestor of Haman the Agagite. The title "Agagite" means Haman was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites and enemy of Israel. Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:12). Haman was the high official of King Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes I) of Persia. It was God's deliverance foiling Haman's plot, which resulted in the execution of Hamon and his sons, that the Jews celebrate every year with the Feast of Purim.

Those espousing the minority position regarding the execution date speculate it would have been a slap to the face of the Jews for a distant relative of the hated Haman to have executed the two highly respected and dearly loved

Jewish religious leaders and 40 young men at the beginning of this feast. A feast celebrating, in part, the death of Herod's relative. Therefore, they believe he would never have done it. Certainly, the executions would have been a direct affront to the Jews. Both Herod and the Jews would have understood that fact. However, it is incorrect to believe it was a reason he would have avoided that date. Rather, it probably **was the reason** he selected that date for the executions.

Herod the Great was a man who wreaked terrible vengeance on his enemies, real or perceived. It could have brought him sadistic pleasure to have the executions on the very day the Jews would have otherwise been rejoicing over the death of Herod the Great's distant cousin Haman. One can speculate Herod the Great might have felt a kinship for a man with whom he had much in common: blood, lust for power, and a willingness to slaughter even children. They also shared the view that stubborn Jews (Haman – Mordecai; Herod – the High Priest et al) are better killed than appeased.

Accepting that timing limitations make the death of Herod the Great between the eclipse and Passover of 4 B.C. impossible; the events fall into place for his demise in the late fall. Further, the following scenario matches the historically recorded date for Herod the Great's death near the end of 4 B.C. that will be examined shortly.

The Impossibility of Herod's Death in Early 4 B.C. Due to the Historical Evidence Regarding His Personal Customs and Health Record

In the aftermath of the execution of the high priest and his followers, Herod the Great's health took a turn for the worse. It seems God's judgment did not allow him to die quickly in Jerusalem. In the fall, he went to Jericho seeking comfort for his illnesses. He would not have done that in the spring or summer. Jericho is 390 meters below

sea level and near the Dead Sea. It is significantly hotter than Jerusalem and would have been very uncomfortable during the warm months. The fact Herod the Great went there means he survived until at least late fall, as that is when it becomes more comfortable to be in Jericho than in Jerusalem. It had become his custom to avoid the cold winter in Jerusalem by going to his palace west of Jericho where it was warm and pleasant.[33]

Herod the Great had for years shown symptoms of chronic kidney disease, including mental illness.[34] He had struggled with depression for years, eventually progressing to severe mental illness. If that were not the case before he ordered the execution of the wife he loved, it certainly was afterward.[35] Eventually, Herod attempted suicide.[36]

When Herod the Great's physical condition deteriorated to a certain point, probably due to diabetes, which likely brought on the kidney condition, his life got even worse. Josephus received and recorded from Herod the Great's personal physician a description that sounds like Fournier's gangrene.[37] Another possible contributing disease, suggested by internal medicine specialist and personal friend of this author, John Rocchi M.D., is that the initial condition preceding the gangrene could have been some type of inflammatory bowel disease (possibly Crohn's disease) causing enterocutaneous fistulas (an abnormal leaking between the intestine or stomach and the exterior of the skin) as well as ulcerations within the colon and small intestine. Such a disease without the gangrene would have taken longer to kill Herod the Great than the gangrene.

The colon condition could in theory cause infection that could progress to Fournier's gangrene. It would have made sense to try to treat the gangrene as well as the fistulas with some type of soothing soak/bath as was attempted by his physicians. Once the gangrene developed, without modern medications, his passing would have followed within a matter of several days.

The complications due to infection from a bowel disease, or a severe skin necrosis, would have occurred very late in the year as he was already in his winter home in Jericho. He could not have survived long after they had developed, and the record shows he was there when he called for doctors.

The prescription of Herod's physicians was to send him to bathe in the natural springs in Callirrhoe, located near Zareth-shahar on the Dead Sea's eastern shore. After he returned to Jericho, they suggested he try oil baths. These prescriptions strongly reinforce the belief he was suffering from a skin disease. The treatments, however, failed. The gangrene, or severe skin necrosis, would have made his last 2-3 weeks torturous. Josephus records:

> But now Herod's distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God's judgment upon him for his sins; for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also exulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. Nay, farther, his privy member was putrefied, and produced worms; and when he sat upright he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns, he had also convulsions in all parts of his body....[38]

Herod the Great's desperate efforts with the physicians had failed. He finally longed for death, knowing there would be mourning, if not for him, then at least for the 60

innocent leaders he had ordered to be killed once he died.[39] Finally after weeks of agony, depression, and desperation, five days after executing his own son, Antipater, Herod died.[40]

Again, this demise was certainly not in the spring or summer, based not only upon the list of things he did after the death of the High Priest, but it also is proven by his location. He died once the weather was cooler, later in the year.

The Precise Date of Herod's Death Provided through Historical Documentation

There is interesting possibility for the exact date when Herod the Great died. The *Megillat Taanit* provides this very specific answer.[41] This document is a list of dates written in the first century shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. It lays out days a Jew was not to fast because of the need to celebrate that date. Every one of those dates matches a high holy day except two. Jewish tradition teaches that one of those two days is the date of Herod the Great's death and the other was the date of the death of Alexander Jannaeus.

Jannaeus was a Jewish ruler who murdered Pharisees out of his loyalty to the sect of the Sadducees and instigated wars and civil wars.[42] Jannaeus had ordered the crucifixion of 800 fellow Jews who were captured after a civil war. Not only did he have them die this gruesome death, but he also had their wives and children executed in front of them, so they could die with emotional grief matching their physical suffering.

One can understand why the Jews would consider the deaths of Jannaeus and Herod the Great as reasons to celebrate. The two dates of death for these men are 7 *Kislev* and 2 *Shevat* respectively. 2 *Shevat* falls in January or February every year. Therefore, it is not a possibility for

the death of Herod the Great as it would mean the reigns of his successors would have begun in 3 B.C., which history refutes. In 4 B.C., 7 *Kislev* would have fallen on November 25/26.

Therefore, the evidence points to 7 *Kislev*, or November 25/26, 4 B.C., as the date of Herod the Great's death. This date would mean Herod the Great's death would have followed several months after the executions of Matthias and Judas and their followers. This time frame matches Herod the Great's tradition and the common sense of when he would have been in Jericho instead of Jerusalem. It allows proper time for all the events listed by Josephus to happen before he died. It allows for adequate time after his death for the events that transpired between his death and the Passover massacre the next spring. It also fits the time frame of the travel to Rome and back with the news of Archelaus' appointment as tetrarch, matching Josephus' account.

Accepting Josephus' record, the executions of the Jews who had tried to cleanse the temple took place on a fast day with an eclipse the following night (the next day by Jewish counting). The logical choice for the eclipse is March of 4 B.C. Then, accepting the date of 7 *Kislev*, 4 B.C. as being Herod the Great's date of death, two issues are settled. Not only is there time for the events of Herod's last months to transpire, but also the dating of the inception of his successors in 4 B.C. has been verified. Herod the Great's death on November 25/26, 4 B.C. means Rome would have regarded the reigns of his successors, the leaders of the tetrarchs, as beginning from that point.

Regarding Herod the Great's total years of reign, he served from the week of September 19-26, 40 B.C. to 7 *Kislev* or November 25/26, 4 B.C.[43] Counting the actual years of his reign, it was 36 years plus about two months. The political new year in Israel began with 1 *Tishrei* (September 30 in 40 B.C. and September 22 in 4 B.C.) Since Herod the

Great served a part of a year both before and after the recognition of a new political year, regardless of the regnal counting system used, his reign would have been counted as 37 years. Again, in the case of Herod the Great, his reign would have been counted as one year plus 36 full years based upon nonaccession-year dating customary with the Jews. This 37-year total matches what Josephus records in *Antiquities of the Jews* 17, 8, 1 and *Wars of the Jews* 1, 33, 8.

The analysis of the year of Herod the Great's death presented in this appendix is supported by a footnote in *Josephus, The Complete Works* provided in the most used translation of that book. It is written by the highly regarded translator William Whiston A.M. Originally published in 1737, this volume was reprinted in 1998 by Thomas Nelson Publishing. The footnote can be found at *Antiquities of the Jews* 17, 9, 3 on page 558 of the 1998 publishing. The footnote states: "This Passover, when the sedition here mentioned was moved against Archelaus, was not one, but thirteen months after the eclipse of the moon, already mentioned."

This 13-month period allows for all the events to take place leading up to Herod the Great's death and then his son to be functioning in office quelling a revolt during Passover of 3 B.C. This analysis is also supported by Kenneth Doig, although he places Herod's date of death on November 27, 4 B.C.[44]

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Proving the beginning of Herod's reign substantiates Christ started His ministry in A.D. 26. Proving when Herod the Great died, establishes a point beyond which Christ could not have been born. These dates support the birth and chronology of Christ identified within this book.

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Quirinius, Ruler of Syria

Who Quirinius was, as well as what and when he ruled, has been the center of criticism of the Bible's chronology of the Life of Christ. These debates result from Luke's mention of him and his leadership during multiple censuses. The following proofs regarding Quirinius and his service are included to confirm both Luke's account and the information contained in this work.

Quirinius was a highly regarded leader. He was born wealthy but politically unconnected. Having distinguished himself as a bold soldier, he was selected to become a senator, signifying his ascendance to the very highest and richest class of Romans.[1] He was chosen in 15 B.C. to be proconsul of the Province of Crete and Cyrenaica.[2] As such, he gained fame through a victory over the Marmarides and the Garamantes, tribes of north Africa.[3]

In 12 B.C. Quirinius was chosen by Augustus for a consulship.[4] A consul was one of two senators selected to lead the senate for a year in alternating months. By the time Quirinius held the position, the Senate had been stripped of most of its power, yet in his consulship he would have had great influence and status. Although not having the raw power of the emperor's leading generals, a consul would have been equal in status to the second highest official in any contemporary political structure. After holding this high office, Quirinius would again distinguish himself as a military commander as he subjugated the Homanadenses, a tribe from a mountainous region between Phrygia, Cilicia, and Lycaonia.[5]

As discussed earlier, the Greek title *hēgĕmōn* was used to describe three types of assignments: the chief general of a military campaign, the top official overseeing the collection of the imperial taxes for an area, or the leading political ruler of an area.[6] Quirinius was clearly a *hēgĕmōn* for the

first type of assignment during the two-year campaign against the Homanadenses. Historians Sir William Mitchell Ramsay and Clifford Wilson defend the position that this province did not have its own garrison of troops. Yet being immediately adjacent to Syria, Quirinius could have led the troops from Syria against this foe. If he used these troops, he would have been referred to in Greek as the "*hēgĕmōn* of Syria." Sir William Mitchell Ramsay places this military campaign as occurring for at least two years during one of these three periods: 7-6 B.C., or late 7 B.C. - early 5 B.C, or 6-5 B.C.[7]

To be fair, some have argued Quirinius could have only attacked this foe from another direction, suggesting he would have used the garrison of troops from Galatia and moved from that direction.[8] This position is refuted by chronologist Samuel J. Andrews as he clarifies this action would have been illegal in Roman law:

> It is important to bear in mind that at this time there were two classes of provinces, the one under the immediate control of the Emperor, the other under the control of the Senate. The governors of the imperial provinces were called Legates or Propraetors, and continued in office during the pleasure of the Emperor; those of the Senatorial provinces, Proconsuls, whose authority lasted only for one year. Syria and Cilicia were both provinces of the former kind, and administered by propraetors. The Homanadenses were a people living in Cilicia, but Cilicia belonged from 25 B.C. down to the time of Vespasian to the province of Syria. As Cyrenius [Quirinius] had been proconsul in Africa, and as it was a rule that the same person should not be ruler over more than one of the consular or praetorian provinces under the care of the Senate, he could not have been governor of any of the provinces immediately adjacent - Asia, Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia; he must then

have been acting as governor of the province of Syria and as legate of the Emperor.[9]

An objection regarding the origin of Quirinius' attack is raised by a writer of the Oxford Classical Dictionary who suggests the attack must have come from the region of Galatia for tactical reasons. Yet coming from an unexpected direction may have allowed for the element of surprise, which could be one reason Quirinius succeeded where others had failed. Speculation where Quirinius' troops were stationed is unnecessary in light of the analysis presented by historian Augustus Zumpt. He shares Andrew's position just quoted, as Zumpt stated for several historically verifiable reasons, Cilicia must be placed as part of the Syrian region during the time of the Homanadenses campaign.[10] Additionally, Zumpt lays out several reasons why the Syria region was the only region Quirinius could have been operating from in his war with the Homanadenses. Since the region of Galatia appears to be the only one that has been suggested as a reasonable alternative to the Syrian region, this list is limited to Zumpt's reasons Galatia could not have been the region from where Quirinius attacked. He asserts it must have been the Syrian region due to the following reasons:

1) Galatia was a senatorial province. Zumpt says, "It was unheard of throughout the period of the Emperors for the same man to be appointed over more than one of the consular or praetorian provinces which were in the power of the Senate."[11] Since Quirinius had been proconsul of Africa, another senatorial province up until (about) 6 B.C. he could not have possibly been given rule over Galatia and any military forces it might have stationed there.

2) Galatia had **no** legions assigned to it as they were unnecessary. This fact is one of the reasons it was a lesser (senatorial) region, as recorded by Pliny the

younger, because it did not warrant leadership of consular rank, only a man of praetorian rank.

3) Quirinius received a *triumphalia* for his actions in the Homanadenses campaign. Such an honor was entirely impossible without the engagement of forces of one or more legions in strength. Therefore, Quirinius must have used forces of that level for the engagement. The Syrian region had three legions within its boundaries at this time.

4) While it is true Cilicia was adjacent to Galatia, it was **not** within its territory, as Greek geographer and historian, Strabo, proves. It was illegal for a Roman praetor to make war beyond the boundaries of his own province. If Quirinius was acting with this level of power as dictated by the position of Galatia's leader he would have been violating Roman law to attack the Homanadenses who resided in Cilicia.

5) At one time the area of Cilicia had included Caria and Phrygia and thus was ruled by Cicero as its governor. By the time Quirinius attacked the Homanadenses, the larger parts of the Cilicia province had been cut off and joined to other regions. It consisted of only "Cilicia Campeatris," which was occasionally attacked from the adjacent mountains by the Homanadenses. It was due to this trauma in 27 B.C., when Augustus gave the tranquil areas of the Cilician area to other regions for management under the Senate, he maintained direct control of the embattled area immediately around "Cilicia Campeatris." Augustus further reduced the Cilicia area by slicing off Cyprus to the Senate's control in 22 B.C. as it was by then also tranquil. This decision left only a small area with much turmoil needing a general of consul status and legions to use in battle. This situation resulted in the unification of Cilcia to the Syrian region

demonstrating the appropriateness of Quirinius' control of the Syrian legions in the war with the Homanadenses.

6) In support of the fact Cilcia, which included the Homanadenses conflict, was within the Syrian Province, Zumpt offers one other point. In A.D. 19, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso was the Roman official sharing charge over the Syrian region with Germanicus. The two leaders got into a squabble over who was to truly rule the area. Piso sent to the tribe of Cilicia demanding troops for his battle with Germanicus. This request would have been ignored if the tribes thought they had an option as Germanicus was leading a powerful army and was the nephew and adopted son of Emperor Tiberius and heir to the throne. The tribes obeyed and sent the troops to Piso. Germanicus died of possible poisoning during his disagreement with Piso, and military conflict broke out between Piso and the forces who had been loyal to Germanicus. Soon after, the Senate tried Piso for his actions and before his sentencing, Piso committed suicide, or some say was murdered by order of Tiberius.

   At Piso's trial Tiberius did not accuse Piso of civil war and treason for involving Roman soldiers from a neighboring region in his conflict with Germanicus. These would have been the charges if Piso did not have the legal right to request the troops. He could only summon them if they were in a territory, the Syrian region, where he had previously been given authority.

   Piso's rash reactions were in response to Germanicus' rash action of taking control of part of his territory without legal authority to do so. Piso died for his foolishness. But despite the animus of Tiberius and the recognition it was foolish to not

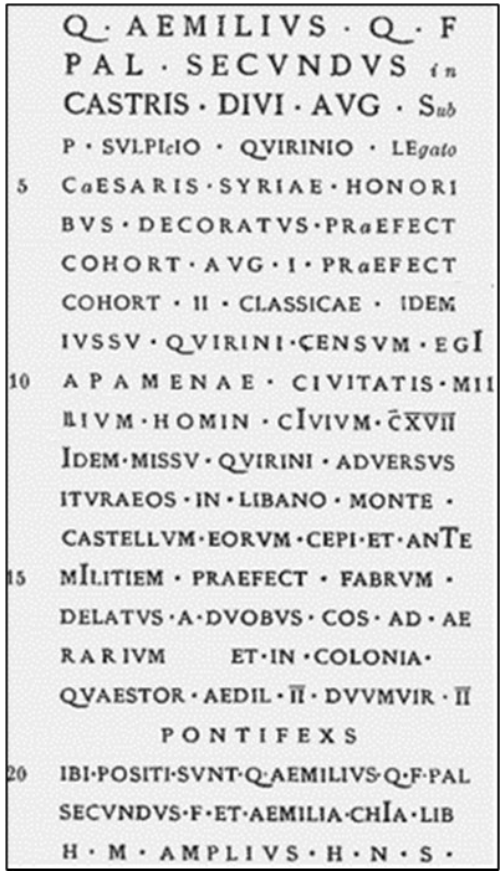
wait for Rome to solve the dispute, Piso's actions were not regarded as treason.

From these arguments developed by Zumpt and discussed by Karl Wieseler in his book, it seems reasonable to accept the conclusion Quirinius was acting as the military general, or *hēgĕmōn* of the Syrian region when he fought the Homanadenses. This war was being fought during the year of declaration of the census that compelled Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem. That year preceded the year of reporting for the census of 6/5 B.C. It is possible the year of reporting, which began September 13 of 6 B.C., could have begun before Quirinius took charge of the census without violating Luke's description of events in Luke 2:2. The six arguments listed above, constructed in the wording of this author, were contained in Zumpt's history as listed and analyzed by Wiesler.[12]

Quirinius' status as military general could have caused Luke to recognize his being *hēgĕmōn* of Syria during the census. However, the time frame makes it far more likely Luke ascribed this title during the census for another reason. After his victory over the Homanadenses, Quirinius became the *hēgĕmōn* directly responsible for the census in the Syrian region.[13]

Quirinius' appointment by Augustus to this position for the census of 6/5 B.C. in the Syrian region is historically documented. Since the emperor appointed him to carry his authority as his representative, Quirinius would have had a special title. As a former senator with this responsibility, Quirinius would have had the very elite Latin title, *Legatus Augusti Pro praetore*. The fact Quirinius was the *Legatus* of Caesar for the purpose of conducting a census is proven by an engraving called the ***Titulus Venetus*** found on a gravestone in Venice. This memorial carries the inscription of a Roman officer named Q. Aemilius Secundus. Finegan passes on what Mommsen records in *Ephemeris epigraphica*, IV (1881) on page 538 that the gravestone says, "that by order of P. Sulpicius

Quirinius," whom he calls "*legatus Caesaris Syriae*," "he himself conducted a census of Apamea, a city state of 117,000 citizens."[14] Someone of the second highest social class, the *equestrian* class, doing the same job would have had the Latin title *Procurator cum jure gladii*. The Roman equestrian class could be considered a parallel to the class of knights of the Middle Ages. They were a highly respected class of people yet not equal to nobility.
An English translation for both titles: *Legatus Augusti Pro praetore* and *Procurator cum jure gladii* is simply "procurator."


Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F
PAL · SECVNDVS in
CASTRIS · DIVI · AVG · Sub
P · SVLPIcIO · QVIRINIO · LEgato
CaESARIS · SYRIAE · HONORI
BVS · DECORATVS · PRaEFECT
COHORT · AVG · I · PRaEFECT
COHORT · II · CLASSICAE · IDEM
IVSSV · QVIRINI · CENSVM · EGI
APAMENAE · CIVITATIS · MII
LIVM · HOMIN · CIVIVM · CXVII
IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS
ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE ·
CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE
MILITIEM · PRAEFECT · FABRVM ·
DELATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE
RARIVM ET · IN · COLONIA ·
QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II
PONTIFEXS
IBI · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F · PAL
SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA · CHIA · LIB
H · M · AMPLIVS · H · N · S ·

Titulus Venetus

When translating the titles from the Latin to Greek they become "*hēgĕmōn*" (SGW #2232), for which English Bible translators have used the word "governor." This double translation from Latin to Greek to English has created confusion as most people see "governor" as simply a political position.

Quirinius' responsibility for the census in the region of Syria, which included Israel, is supported by Joseph Benson's Commentary of the Old and New Testaments: Luke 2. It provides this quote, "Dr. Hammond quotes

Suidas' Lexicon as relating, on the authority of an ancient author, 'Cesar (*old spelling*) Augustus, desiring to know the strength and state of his dominions, sent twenty chosen men, one into one part, another into another, to take this account; and that Publius Sulpicius Quirinius had Syria for his province.'"[15]

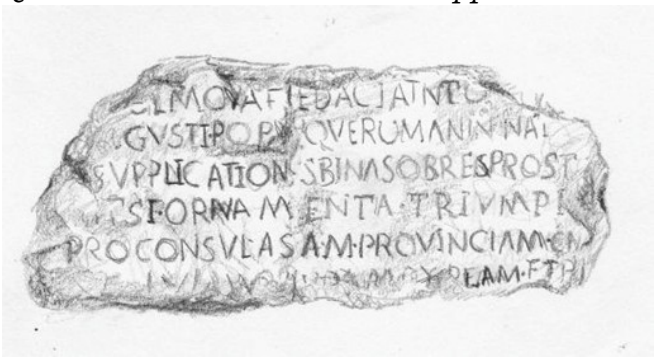
With either his generalship or his position in the census, it is clear Quirinius was *hēgĕmōn* of Syria during the ordering and the implementation of the census. If one includes both positions, there would probably not have been any time during the census period when he was not rightly called "*hēgĕmōn* of Syria."

Quirinius had been the political governor of a senatorial province in Africa. He had been a military general during two significant campaigns. And then he had been responsible for an entire region for a census/taxation. Some have questioned why Quirinius would again be trusted with the authority of being a political governor. Rome was generally very careful to limit an individual's time of carrying power due to fear of revolt. Yet after the census, Quirinius served as political governor of Syria, twice, while also receiving during his life several high honors.

If a general had won a major campaign with distinction, he would perhaps be awarded an "*ornamenta triumphalia*" or "triumph." This parade was the highest honor a Roman soldier could receive and one Quirinius achieved. There was another honor that ranked just below the *triumphalia*, also including a parade, called an *ovation*. The differences between these two military honors is discussed in the appendix "**The Dating of Tiberius' Co-Regency.**"

There was another great Roman honor. This third honor was available to military heroes or civilians who had distinguished themselves in some extraordinary way. It was called a "*supplications*" or "supplication." Once a year the emperor would have a public ceremony where he

brought a personal prayer before his god. This prayer was to communicate to the god, and for the public record, the wonderful thing a person had done and to ask for the god's special blessing upon them in the coming year. Quirinius received **two** such *supplications.*[16]



Depiction of the Tiber Fragment
by Meghan Fedor @nutmegillustrations

These honors received by Quirinius provide evidence of the high regard in which Augustus held him and explains why he received the rare privilege of twice being the political governor of the same province. Subsequent to Quirinius' duties during the census, he served as the political governor of Syria from 4 B.C. through 1 B.C. He then had the honor again from A.D. 6-11.[17] Although disputed by some, the **Tibur (Tivoli) fragment** found in 1794 makes the case for Quirinius' two terms as Syria's political governor. It documents the accomplishments of a man who had received a *triumphalia* and two *supplications* and was **twice** the political governor of Syria during the reign of Caesar Augustus. Many scholars support, what seems obvious, the governor with two separate terms must have been Quirinius.[18] This valuable piece of stone provides information to buttress both the Biblical and historical record.[19] Quirinius' second appointment as the political governor of Syria between A.D. 6-11 was the second time there was a census/taxation while Quirinius was *hēgĕmōn* of Syria, as the Gospel of Luke references (Luke 2:2).

In A.D. 2 Augustus appointed Quirinius as personal tutor of his adopted son (actual stepson) Tiberius, who was

eventually to become emperor. Tiberius Caesar trusted and liked his former tutor, making him a paid court advisor. Upon the death of Quirinius in A.D. 21, Tiberius afforded him the honor of a public funeral. Quirinius' fame explains why Luke did not bother to go into a description of who Quirinius was or his positions beyond a simple statement. Any educated reader in Israel or Roman society in that century, and probably in the next, would have known who he was and what he did.

When Luke refers to Quirinius as *hēgĕmōn* over Syria he was without error or historical dispute to use the term, for either his generalship or his leadership of the census itself in the region. Despite all the criticism, Luke was absolutely correct when he wrote that it was the first time Quirinius was the *hēgĕmōn* of Syria over a census in the area of Judea when he carried authority during the 6/5 B.C. census. Quirinius was indeed a *hēgĕmōn* over this area a second time during a census when he was political governor of the region during the A.D. 6 census.[20]

To appreciate Luke's precision, *hēgĕmōn* was not the only Greek word he could have used that is translatable as governor. He could have used *kubĕrnētēs* (SGW #2942), which would have been the most commonly used Greek word for governor, as it also means commander, ruler, or captain who steers. If Luke was seeking to describe only his authority in a military capacity, he could have used the word *stratēgŏs* (SGW #4755), which means strategist and was a commonly used term for general. He could have used *nŏmŏthĕtēs* (SGW #3550), which also means prefect or lawgiver, if he wanted to nuance politics. He could have chosen *praktōr* (SGW #4233), which also means agent, representative or official collector, to highlight his role of being the direct representative of Caesar over the taxation process. Luke's choice of *hēgĕmōn* was the perfect word to use because it is the one word to accurately describe Quirinius' various positions and the authority he carried during both the periods of census/taxation in 6/5 B.C. and A.D. 6. It is both accurate and the most efficient way

to do so. Luke is not only correct to say Quirinius was *hēgĕmōn*, he is also brilliant!

For the sake of clarity, here is a list of the times Quirinius was, and could accurately be recorded as being, a *hēgĕmōn* of Syria:

> He was "*hēgĕmōn* (military general) of Syria" as commanding officer of the Roman armies garrisoned in Syria during the Homanadenses campaign 7/6-6/5 B.C. for which he obtained a triumph;
>
> He was "*hēgĕmōn* (personal deputy of the Emperor with responsibility over the empire's census/treasury) of Syria" during the census in 6/5 B.C. at the completion of the Homanadenses campaign;
>
> He was "*hēgĕmōn* (political governor) of Syria" 4 B.C. through 1 B.C.[21]; and,
>
> He was "*hēgĕmōn* (political governor) of Syria" and its territories A.D. 6-11 during which the next census was completed in A.D. 6.[22]

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The Dating of Tiberius' Co-Regency

Caesar Augustus was frustrated several times in his efforts to position an heir. Due to the untimely deaths of several other potential heirs, his stepson Tiberius became his choice. Augustus' first choice was his son-in-law, Marcus Agrippa. When Augustus was seriously ill in 23 B.C., he had his will read before the Senate, which included the provision Marcus Agrippa was to follow him as emperor. However, Marcus Agrippa preceded Augustus in death in March of 12 B.C.[1]

Faced with the dilemma of the loss of his heir, Augustus named his two step-sons, children of his wife, Julia/Livia, to be joint-heirs to the throne. As was discussed earlier, the dual name Julia/Livia is for clarity. Livia Drusilla became Julia Augustus when she was formally adopted into the Julian royal family in A.D. 14. She is called both Julia and Livia by various historians and writers depending upon what point in time they are referring to her. To avoid confusion both names have been attached to her in this text.

These stepsons of Augustus were Drusus and his younger brother Tiberius. This solution was only temporary as Drusus died from injuries sustained from falling off a horse in 9 B.C., and Tiberius fell out of favor with Augustus. Augustus then selected his two young grandsons, Gaius and Lucius, to be his heirs.

Augustus began to train Gaius and Lucius for the position of emperor and marked them as heirs by giving them the title of "caesar." Alas, these also died, Lucius at 20 years of age in A.D. 2 and Gaius at 24 years of age in A.D. 4. This sorrowful situation brought Augustus back to the decision to have Tiberius be his primary heir.[2] It seems likely these deaths and his own weakening state drove Augustus to direct the Senate to install Tiberius as co-regent with him.

The following timeline of the pertinent events in the life of Tiberius leading up to and during his co-regency with Caesar Augustus is constructed primarily from these sources:

Fasti Praenestini **-** The word *fasti* means calendar. The word *Praenestini* is a reference to the town of Praeneste in the Latium region of Italy near where the calendar was discovered. This calendar was created by the famous grammarian M. Verrius Flaccus.[3] The existing fragments of this calendar list important events of Roman history and the month and day they occurred. They do not specify the year. The readers of the period would generally have recognized the years the events happened. It notes both the *ovation* and the *triumphalia* of Tiberius. The translation of the Latin of this calendar used in this text comes from Attalus.org. Suetonius records:

> The freedman, Marcus Verrius Flaccus, won a particular praise for his methods... for this reason he was selected by Augustus as a tutor for his grandsons and transferred to the palace with his whole school, but on the condition that he should accept no more pupils. He taught in the hall of Catulus' house, which at that time was part of the palace, and was paid 100,000 sesterces per annum. He died at a ripe old age in the reign of Tiberius. There is a statue to him in Praeneste in the lower part of the forum facing the hemicycle, where he displayed the Calendar of Praeneste, which he had personally revised and engraved on its marble walls.[4]

Marcus Velleius Paterculus' ***History*** **-** This work records Roman history from the end of the Trojan War to the death of Julia/Livia, Tiberius' mother, in A.D. 29. Velleius was a witness to some of the events

he records, including participating personally in the *triumphalia* of Tiberius.[5]

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus' *The Twelve Caesars* - "The Twelve Caesars," was dedicated in A.D. 119. Suetonius, lived from approximately A.D. 70 until after A.D. 130.[6]

Tacitus' *Annals* - Tacitus, a Roman senator, wrote the "Annals" and the "Histories." These works span the reigns of Tiberius through the First Jewish-Roman War, A.D. 70. He was born in approximately A.D. 56 and died in approximately A.D. 120.[7]

Cassius Dio' *Roman History* - Dio published 80 volumes of Roman history that record from the arrival of Aeneas in Italy through A.D. 229, or approximately 1,000 years. He was born around A.D. 164 and died after A.D. 229.[8] Peter Michael Swan's translation and analyses of Dio's writings published in 2004 was used in this text.

In addition, footnotes of Edward Greswell's Dissertation VIII and his translation of Latin from other texts was valuable and has been cited. Information was also gained from the compilation provided by Liebenam of *Fasti Consulares*, as contained in pages 100-105 of the *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* by Jack Finegan.

There are places where these sources conflict in some of their details. In such cases, cross-referencing data and logic was necessary to make determinations which record is correct since including all the points of variance would make this work long, cumbersome, and confusing.

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As heir to the throne and the empire's most prominent general, Tiberius exercised great power and influence for

years. There is confusion regarding the starting point of Tiberius' co-regency because he had such power for many years and because events and titles were manipulated to elevate him. For more information on the titles of the rulers of Rome, read the appendix: "**Of Titles and Coins**." Nevertheless, Tiberius' progression to power through the major political events of his life are reflected in the timeline below documenting when and how the co-regency began. Thus, this timeline provides information needed to evaluate the dating in this book.

June 26, A.D. 4

Augustus adopts his stepson Tiberius, who was born to his wife Julia/Livia, and changes his name to Tiberius Julius Caesar. Augustus has Tiberius appointed and invested with *tribunician powers* for a ten-year period. Shortly afterward, Augustus sends Tiberius to Germania for a military campaign.[9] At this point, Tiberius is marked as the heir apparent to the throne.

Late Summer A.D. 7

Having returned from Germania, Tiberius is sent to quell a revolt in Pannonia, an area to the East of and bordering upper Italy. Greswell records the progression of the Pannonian war by saying:

> After this, there is mention in Velleius of one summer, the summer of U.C. 760 [A.D. 7]; of the winter after that; of a second summer, the summer of U.C. 761 [A.D. 8] of the autumn of the same year; of another summer, the summer of U.C. 762 [A.D. 9], when operations were transferred into Dalmatia; and of the close of the war the same year; consequently U.C. 762 [A.D. 9].[10]

The initials U.C. stand for the Latin words *Urbe condita* or *Urbis conditae,* which means "in the year of the city." The empire marked years counting from the founding of the city of Rome, its first year being year one (1).

Late Summer A.D. 9

In Dalmatia, Tiberius received the surrender of Bato the Pannonian general and then proceeded back to Rome. He arrived shortly before news reached the city of the slaughter of the three legions under Varus in the Teutoburg Forest in what is today northern Germany. The battle under Varus was during August of A.D. 9.[11] Or, the battle could have been in September of A.D. 9.[12]

After Tiberius returned from his victory in Pannonia, he designates his spoils from the Pannonian campaign for the funding of repairs to two temples: the Temple of Concord, which was to become a shrine to Augustus, and the Temple of the Twins - Pollux and Castor, which was to be dedicated for himself and his deceased older brother, whom he dearly loved.[13]

The Senate voted that he be awarded an *ovation.*[14] Along with his *ovation*, Tiberius received the honor of conducting Bato's *tribunal* (military court to judge a defeated foe) in the *Septa* (the grand public enclosure having seven pillars). The *ovation* and the *tribunal* would occur after he set military affairs in order in Germania.[15] Tiberius departed almost immediately to address the pressing conflict in Germania.

An *ovation* was a great honor, but it was not as grand as a *triumphalia.* An *ovation* was awarded for a significant military victory with a lesser opponent. This award signified the empire was helped, but it was not saved or greatly expanded. Pannonia represented a significant war that lasted three years with a formidable opponent, but alone this region and its military forces were no match for

the Roman Empire and its legions. It was not imagined they posed a threat to the empire's existence. Therefore, the lesser honor was ordered.

Suetonius notes in Tiberius chapter 9 Tiberius received both this honor and also one "riding in a chariot" that was a *triumphalia*.[16] For purposes of clarity, here is a side-by-side contrast of an *ovation* and a *triumphalia*. These summaries may help a reader of the ancient documents understand what would have been obvious distinctions to a Roman during the first century A.D.

Recipient of an *Ovation*

- Entered Rome walking or riding a horse.

- Wore a head ring, or chaplet, made of myrtle in honor of Venus. Tiberius, however, possibly because he was heir to the throne, wore a laurel chaplet. After the procession a sheep was offered in sacrifice.

- Wore a *praetexta*, a robe worn by a magistrate or priest. P. Holland's translation of Suetonius Tiberius 17 asserts that this was Tiberius' garb for his ovation; other translations use the term "senatorial" robe.[17] If Tiberius had worn a senatorial robe it would have been because he was a former consul.

- Was not accompanied in procession by political officials, captured kings or generals, or his soldiers. Bato was apparently not in Tiberius' *ovation* procession, but awaited his judgment at the *Septa* tribunal.

Recipient of a *Triumphalia*

- Entered Rome riding in a *biga*, a chariot drawn by two or four white horses.

- Wore a full neck wreath made of laurel in honor of their leading god, Jupiter, for whom a bull was sacrificed at the end of the procession.

- Wore the *toga* customary of a senator.

- Carried an ivory scepter topped by a golden eagle, the symbol of the empire, in his left hand; had the right to carry a *fasces*, symbolizing magisterial authority, with laurels attached to it in his right hand.

- Was preceded in the procession by consuls and senators, then kings or generals he had defeated and other prizes of war, then magisterial attendants, then the honored commander himself. After the honored guest came his children and his officers on horseback. These were followed by soldiers of lesser rank who walked and sang songs honoring the gods to keep them from jealousy.

Subsequent to being voted an *ovation*, Tiberius is awarded a *triumphalia*.[18] Tiberius had one battle with the barbarians, most likely stabilizing the battle lines at the Rhine river, in late A.D. 9.[19] Such an accomplishment would have been a huge relief to the empire after the disastrous loss in the Teutoburg Forest.

January 16 A.D. 10

During the reign of Augustus, and perhaps for some years following, January 16 was an important ceremonial date in the empire. This is the date in 27 B.C. when Octavian accepted the position of emperor by senatorial decree and

changed his name to Augustus. It is, therefore, this date in A.D. 10 Tiberius chose to dedicate the Temple of Concord for the worship of his father, Augustus, as a god. While his forces were in winter camp, Tiberius returned briefly to Rome to walk in his *ovation* and to dedicate the Temple of Concord. The dedication of the Temple of Concord as well as the *ovation* for Tiberius are commemorated on the *Fasti Praenestini* as occurring on January 16. Suetonius records:

> As for the triumph, Tiberius himself did put it off until a further day, because the whole state was in mourning for the overthrow and loss above said of Varus. Nevertheless, he entered the city in his rich praetexta, or embroidered purple robe, with a chaplet of laurel upon his head, and so mounted up to the tribunal erected for him in the Septa, while the Senate stood to give attendance; and there, together with Augustus, in between the two consuls, he took his place and sat down.[20]

The brief return to Rome noted by Suetonius, in Tiberius 17 was after Tiberius had already been in Germania as reflected by the Greek verb tense used in Tiberius 18, that is noted in the English: "the next year (A.D. 10) *being returned* into Germany."[21] (italics added) Unfortunately, this grammatical construction meaning Tiberius had already been in Germania before that point is missed unless one understands the Greek verb tense. Repeating, Tiberius had been to Germania, returned to Rome for part of the month of January, and then went back to Germania for the remainder of his two-year campaign.

Looking at the big picture gives more perspective and provides the reason why he was awarded a *triumphalia*. As Tiberius was defeating the Pannonians, the neighboring tribes of Germania were forming an alliance among themselves and setting up the ambush that would absolutely decimate Legate P. Quinctilius Varus and his

three legions in the Teutoburg Forest. This defeat resulted in a loss of up to 20,000 veteran soldiers and shattered Rome's image of invincibility.

The clans in Germania represented a serious threat, but had Tiberius not already neutralized the Pannonians, the Romans believed the two groups would have linked together as a combined enemy that could then have been great enough to threaten the empire's very existence. Thus, Tiberius had in fact gained a military victory in Pannonia that potentially saved the empire. A *triumphalia* was awarded to Tiberius by the Senate, the only body which could award either an *ovation* or a *triumphalia*.

Due to the mood of the nation and the need to rush to the theater of battle in Germania, the *triumphalia* was delayed for two years until late A.D. 11. In addition to voting the *triumphalia*, the Senate, or specific senators, seeking to curry favor with the emperor and his heir suggested several titles to bestow upon Tiberius. According to both Dio and Suetonius, Augustus heard and rejected three attempts put forth in the Senate. These three suggestions of surnames or titles to be given Tiberius were:

> *Pannonicus*, in honor of his victory in Pannonia;
> *Invictus*, meaning invincible or unconquered;
> and *Pius*, meaning the devoted.

Each time Augustus rejects the new surname or title for Tiberius saying the title (surname), "Augustus," he had directed for Tiberius to receive after his own death, was enough.[22]

At this point, as well as being heir to the throne, Tiberius was a national hero. Yet there is no evidence to support the belief the temple dedication began his co-regency or that it had already begun. On the contrary, with few exceptions, scholars hold his arrival in January A.D. 10 in Rome was not marked by an *adventus*, which was "the ceremony of an emperor's formal arrival at a city."[23]

During the next two years, Tiberius fought the cunning and powerful people of Germania to a standoff with the Romans occupying the West bank of the Rhine and the barbarians occupying the East bank.[24]

January 16 and October 23,
the Two Dates of the *Fasti Praenestini*

As stated, Verrius Flaccus, the creator of the *Fasti Praenestini*, did not include the years when events occurred on his calendar. Although they may not have been necessary in his time, it has created difficulties today. Confusion is created because the *fasti* notes Tiberius was honored for his victory in Pannonia on two dates, January 16 and October 23. Verrius Flaccus' assumption readers would understand his meanings has resulted in scholars of later centuries errantly concluding January 16 was the date of Tiberius' *triumphalia*. Correct analysis, including work by those at Roman history website, Attalus.org, leads to the conclusion January 16 marked Tiberius' *ovation* and October 23 was the date of his *triumphalia*. The *triumphalia* followed the *ovation* by 21 months.

The *Fasti Praenestini* provides details identifying which event was the *ovation* and which was the *triumphalia*. Input from the history of Cassius Dio and others also makes it clear the *ovation* was January 16, A.D. 10. Again, both *Fasti Praenestini* and Dio provide the information necessary to determine the *triumphalia* was on October 23 after a total of two years of fighting in Germania. This information puts the *triumphalia* in late A.D. 11.

Fasti Praenestini provides the following phrases attached to these dates. The English is translated from the Latin, as found at Attalus.org. This author is responsible for the analysis.

January 16 (A.D. 10)

"*Tiberius Caesar from Pannonia,*" occurred along with the tribunal in the Septa in the consulships of Dolabella and Silano, which was A.D. 10.[25]

The dedication of the Temple of Concorde, which occurred the same day as the *ovation*, happened the year before the prosecution of the major battles of the war in Germania and the consulships of A.D. 11.[26] Roman coins commemorate this event.

October 23 (A.D. 11)

"*Tiberius rode a chariot in triumph from Illyricum.*" It is clear this was the *triumphalia* since the October date includes reference to "a chariot in triumph." A chariot was not permitted in an *ovation,* but it was the custom in a *triumphalia.* The word "triumph" in the phrase was a shortened form of *triumphalia*. It serves as a noun describing in what event Tiberius rode. Triumph is not used here as an adverb describing the manner or attitude in which he rode.

It can be understood how one could be confused by the January 16 date since it references Pannonia and an honor for Tiberius. Yet Suetonius states Tiberius clearly had **both** an *ovation* and a *triumphalia* for his action in Pannonia/Illyricum.

Note the use of Pannonia and Illyricum as synonyms, as is done in many cases. If one were to say, "Allegheny County, Pennsylvania is the home of Pittsburghers," although not most precise, it would be correct. The city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is entirely within Allegheny County. Pannonia was entirely within the region then called Illyricum.

As stated, the military victory against the smaller area, Pannonia, was only worthy of an *ovation*. Had

the war continued and gained broader support in the larger area called Illyricum and if those armies had allied with forces in neighboring Germania, the war would have been an immensely larger threat. Again, the Pannonian victory's *ovation* was celebrated on January 16, A.D. 10. In light of the war in Germania, the "victory" over Pannonia warranted the greater honor of the *triumphalia* celebrated on October 23, A.D. 11. The declaration in the *fasti* even notes the smaller area of Pannonia for the *ovation*, and the broader area, Illyricum, for the *triumphalia*.

The dates provided by this ancient calendar can be trusted. It was accepted as accurate and official in its day and for centuries following the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. If the calendar had contained error, it would not have received such honor.

January 27, A.D. 10

Tiberius dedicated the Temple of the Twins (Castor and Pollux) in the name of his deceased brother Drusus and himself in honor of their friendship.[27]

Senatorial Decree Regarding the Co-Regency
August 25, A.D. 10

After Tiberius' turning of the tide in Germania, in anticipation of his soon return to Rome, the Senate took up the matter of the addition of Tiberius with Augustus in the administration of the empire. Velleius records Tiberius' admission to equality with Augustus happened before the celebration of Tiberius' *triumphalia*, while Suetonius records it occurred shortly after that event. Yet they are not in conflict. Velleius referred to a *senatus decretum* while Suetonius referred to the codifying of the final wording of the law related to the *senatus decretum*.

A *senatus decretum* was "the formal resolution by which the Roman Senate pronounced advice or instruction at the request of a magistrate..."[28] In this case, the requesting "magistrate" was Augustus. Velleius specifically mentions a *senatus decretum* describing it as follows: "at the **request** of his father (Augustus) that he should have in all the provinces and armies a power equal to his own, the Senate and Roman People so **decreed**."[29] Velleius' history makes no reference to items that are later specified in the formal law enshrining the resolution of the will of Augustus. The lack of specificity indicates Velleius was referring only to the decree that occurred before the *triumphalia*.[30]

The law that was passed soon after the *triumphalia* fleshed out the specifics, namely that Tiberius would be responsible for the administration of the provinces and join Augustus in taking the census.[31]

Clement of Alexandria mentions two lengths of time of the reign of Tiberius in his writings, one being the period he ruled after Augustus' passing. The other date Clement recorded was also very specific. He recorded Tiberius' reign was exactly "26 years, 6 months, nineteen days."[32] Tiberius passed on March 16, A.D. 37. Counting back in time the appropriate number of years, months, and days from that date, one arrives on August 25 A.D. 10. This date is almost certainly the date of the *senatus decretum*:

August 25, A.D. 10 - Date of *senatus decretum*

(plus 26 years = August 25, A.D. 36)
(plus 6 months = February 25, A.D. 37)
(plus 19 days = March 16, A.D. 37)

March 16, A.D. 37 – Date of Tiberius' death

The *senatus decretum* occurred not just in anticipation of Tiberius' return to Rome, but also to allow for the arrangements regarding the *triumphalia* and for the

invitations to be delivered to the attendees of the 1,000-table banquet held in conjunction with the *triumphalia*. Greswell points out Tiberius' presence was not recorded, nor was it necessary he be present, for the resolution concerning the decree to be passed by the Senate.[33]

This timetable makes perfect sense. Having things done in this order allowed for the recognition of Tiberius within the co-regency and the ultimate ascendancy of Tiberius after Augustus' death to be smooth and accepted throughout the empire. Had this progression not occurred, it could have caused confusion or not allowed proper time for an event adequate to the occasion.

In addition to Clement of Alexandria regarding the *senatus decretum* as a point to regard the start of Tiberius' reign as a co-regent, it seems clear, Velleius shared this position. Velleius regarded the *senatus decretum* as the beginning of the co-regency of Augustus and Tiberius. Further, Velleius stated in his work, *A Roman History*, book 2, chapter 121 the decree happened before he mentioned Tiberius' *Triumphalia*. Placing it in accord with the date Clement presented for this decree.

In his work *A History of Rome*, historian Theodor Mommsen cited Velleius' record of the *senatus decretum*. Mommsen concluded the co-regency occurred in late A.D. 11 after the decree. Although the information in this text does not support an A.D. 11 decree, it certainly agrees with Mommsen that the co-regency began near the end of A.D. 11 after the *senatus decretum*. Historian Harold Hoehner presents this information and extrapolates that the 15th year of Tiberius, mentioned in Luke 3:1, would have been A.D. 25/26 in Mommsen's thinking.[34] This text agrees with Mommsen's dating of the 15th year of Tiberius.

Clement of Alexandria's dating of the *senatus decretum* is reliable as his writing is much closer to the event. Regardless, Clement's A.D. 10 or Mommsen's A.D. 11 dating of the *senatus decretum* does not necessarily

determine the start of the co-regency per Luke as will be discussed. Luke had a different perspective.

Between September 24 and October 22, A.D. 11

Dio records Tiberius continuing to campaign in Germania into U.C. 764 (A.D. 11) when Lepidus and Taurus were consuls (one serving only through June) and Tiberius remaining in Germania as late as September 23, the birthday of Augustus.[35] He returned after securing what Rome accepted as a victory. As mentioned, it was actually a stalemate with the barbarians, each controlling one side of the Rhine.[36] Tiberius' return to Rome was sometime after Augustus' birthday.[37]

October 23 A.D. 11

October 23 was an important date to the emperor, as it was the anniversary of the victory in 42 B.C. over Brutus' army by the army of Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) in the Second Battle of Philippi. Brutus was a "friend" of Augustus' adoptive father Julius Caesar who conspired in Caesar's assassination. With defeat, Brutus committed suicide. The date of this victory seems to be the reason it was selected for the *triumphalia*. Dio supports this date without mention of the year in section 56, 17, 1 of his record; nevertheless, based upon Dio's consul record in 56, 25 the year is A.D. 11. Suetonius records Tiberius' receiving his *triumphalia* for his victory in Pannonia/Illyricum as follows:

> Being after two years returned out of Germany to Rome, he rode in that triumph which he had deferred, accompanied by his lieutenants, for whom he had obtained triumphal ornaments. And ere he turned into the Capital he alighted from his chariot and bowed himself

> to the knees of his father, sitting then before him as president (underlining added).[38]

Tiberius is accorded great honor and glory in his *triumphalia*, the normal protocol as shown earlier. What is not normal is for the recipient to lavish upon his male guests three gold coins to commemorate the event or to do this at a banquet with guests at 1,000 tables![39] He likely gave the standard gold coin, the *aureus*. The *aureus* was equal in value to 25 *denarii*.[40] A denarii was a day's wage for a laborer with approximately 300 working days a year. Thus, Tiberius' gift was equal to 3 month's wages for an average worker.

This *triumphalia* and the banquet were the public celebration of Tiberius' co-regency. These, along with the Senate decree and soon to be codified law, all happened at Augustus' orchestration. According to Swan, Tiberius was not greeted upon entrance to the city with an *adventus,* which would have been accorded him had he already been an emperor.[41] Thus, the lack of an *adventus* would mean Tiberius had not yet been formally recognized as co-regent when he entered Rome for the *triumphalia*. It could be argued the public perception of Tiberius being co-regent began with the *triumphalia*. Politicians commonly say, "perception is reality in politics." Nevertheless, the legal status would occur when the law was passed by the Senate.

The Date of the Senate's Action after the *Triumphalia*

According to Suetonius, soon after the *triumphalia* Tiberius was given specific responsibilities over the provinces.[42] This law is recorded in Suetonius 21 as follows:

> … a law having been not long after carried by the consuls for his [Tiberius] being appointed a colleague with Augustus in the administration

> of the provinces, and in taking the census, when that was finished he went into Illyricum.[43]

This law very likely was passed before the close of A.D. 11. Certainly, the Senate would not have allowed the important memorial date of January 16 to go by without formally recognizing in law Tiberius' ascension to co-regency with Augustus.

Some have errantly disregarded Tiberius' co-regency, suggesting Tiberius did not in fact engage in ruling the empire alongside his father. However, Tiberius clearly performed three acts as co-regent during A.D. 12 according to Greswell and historians whom he quotes. Greswell writes: "Tiberius was a Censor along with Augustus, as mentioned in the law concerning the co-regency. This census began in A.D. 12 and was completed in A.D. 13."[44] Greswell completes his list of three things, including the census, that prove Tiberius had power alongside Augustus as emperor in A.D. 12 by saying, "Tiberius made two appointments of his friends to political office. He appointed or promised to make Pomponius Flaccus *propraetor* of Syria; and he appointed Lucius Piso as prefect of the city of Rome **which occurred in the middle of A.D. 12.**"[45] Piso is noted by Tacitus as being well-liked and respected during 20 years of continuous rule.[46]

The actions regarding the appointment of these two men are interesting reading. These men were Tiberius' drinking buddies, who himself was known for hard drinking even from his youth. At 15 years of age he got the nickname, "drinker of wine with no water added."[47] One could speculate Tiberius made these appointments while drunk. An appointment made while drunk could mean Tiberius was not acting coherently in exercising such power. However, the record shows, at least in the case of Piso, the appointment was acted upon promptly by the Senate, thus beginning Piso's 20 years of service as prefect of Rome.

Here is part of Greswell's quote concerning the actions of Tiberius as co-regent leading the empire during A.D. 12:

> Again, there is a remarkable statement in Suetonius and Pliny, who are confirmed also by [information contained in the writing of] Seneca; which, being compared with another [record] in Tacitus, demonstrates that Tiberius was already *Princeps*, and exercising the functions of royalty, by disposing of offices of patronage and trust, U.C. 765 [A.D. 12] itself. Lucius Piso, prefect of the city, died U.C. 785 [A.D. 32]; and as the context proves, after 785 *medium* [middle]; having held his office previously *viginti per annos* [for twenty years]. If so, he was appointed after U.C. 765 [A.D. 12], *medium.* But his appointment is unanimously attributed by the above mentioned authorities to Tiberius; and to Tiberius already *Princeps*; and by Suetonius in particular, to Tiberius *In Ipsa publicorum morum correctione*; that is, when a census was going on. If so, Tiberius was both *Princeps* and *Censor* U.C. 765 [A.D. 12]. At the same time, according to Suetonius, he either made, or promised to make, Pomponius Flaccus propraetor of Syria: and this promise must some time have been performed; for Pomponius died in office there, U.C. 786 [A.D. 33].
>
> The fact, then of Tiberius' association in the empire with Augustus, seems to be too well attested to admit of being called into question; and the time requires, with great reason, to be placed either U.C. 765 *ineunte* [at the beginning of], or not later than U.C. 765 [A.D. 12], medio [in the middle].[48]

While recognizing Edward Greswell's brilliance for which this work is in debt, his use of the term "*Princeps*" in these remarks must be disputed. Greswell is correctly and clearly communicating Tiberius shared status with Augustus as a co-regent or emperor in order to have the authority to do the things he did in A.D. 12. Yet the term "*Princeps*" was not used by those he quotes. This word means "first citizen." By definition, only one person can be "first" and Augustus was still alive in A.D. 12.

Greswell allows that the actions and the co-regency could have begun as late as mid-summer A.D. 12. Although Greswell is conservative in his dating, however, the co-regency could not have been that late. The October 23, A.D. 11 *triumphalia* and the law passed "shortly thereafter" per Suetonius 21 means it could not have been beyond early A.D. 12.

Scholars support a variety of dates for the beginning of Tiberius' co-regency over a three-year period, from as early as A.D. 10 to as late as A.D. 13. Yet the range for the inception of the co-regency held in this work, late A.D. 11 through early January A.D. 12, is supported by ancient Roman historians mentioned earlier. The co-regency dating that this text holds has been supported by quotes from scholars Alfred Edersheim and Edward Greswell. There are also other notable theologians who support this timing, such as Erich Sauer who served as the Director of the Bible School in Wiedenest, Germany who writes the co-regency began shortly before January 16, A.D. 12.[49]

January A.D. 13

Tiberius assumed the emperor's position as chairman of the Senate when it convened due to Augustus' publicly acknowledged poor health.[50] The Senate would be expected to convene near the start of the year. Tiberius took the position as its leader at that point. The chairmanship was the position of the emperor. Since

Tiberius carried this power at the start of the session, he must already have begun his co-regency.

The fact Tiberius did not assume chairmanship of the Senate when it convened at the start of January A.D. 12 might imply the Senate had not taken the action specifying his roles and position as co-regent until after convening in A.D. 12, or it could also mean Augustus' health was still adequate at that point to continue in this role.

Even without the three actions of Tiberius as co-regent documented above, Tiberius' leadership of the Senate in the role of an emperor at the start of A.D. 13 shows his co-regency must have begun before that point. Therefore, theories that place the *triumphalia* in late A.D. 12 with the law being passed in January A.D. 13 do not align with the historical record.

A.D. 14

Tiberius performed *lustrum conditum* along with Augustus after Augustus' third census.[51] *Lustrum* was a ceremonial purification of the Roman people made after the census. Once *lustrum* was completed, the actions passed by the Senate into law shortly after the *triumphalia* of October 23, A.D. 11 had been fulfilled. *Lustrum* occurred only a few months before Augustus' death on August 19, A.D. 14.

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The issue for this study is when the 15th year of Tiberius' reign mentioned in Luke 3:1 occurred. Luke counted the reign of Tiberius not from the death of Augustus, but from the co-regency. The word used in Luke 3:1 to describe Tiberius' reign is a broad word that does not imply the sole rulership of a monarch. The word used simply means to

carry the power to rule, Strong's Greek word number 2231, "ἡγεμονίας", pronounced "hēgemonias."

There are three alternatives from which to count the co-regency: the Senate's decree, the *triumphalia*, and the passage of the law. Luke was intelligent and educated. It is quite possible he knew of all three significant points related to Tiberius' co-regency.

While the *senatus decretum* marked the beginning of Tiberius sharing power and started the movement toward Tiberius becoming emperor, it appears even at the time only a handful regarded it as the beginning point of the co-regency. The decree did not give Tiberius direct responsibility over the provinces. Most telling, it was not supported by an *adventus*. All of these facts define the earliest date for the beginning of the co-regency of Tiberius with Augustus on or after October 23, A.D. 11 with Tiberius' *triumphalia*. Symbolically, the *triumphalia* would mark the inception of the co-regency in the minds of most citizens.

The latest defensible date would have been when the co-regency was codified in law. Logic informed by custom allows for determination of a date before which the law must have been passed, by such it was no later than Augustus' anniversary of January 16, of A.D. 12. Yet the exact date is not apparent. This omission along with the statement it occurred shortly after the *triumphalia* lends weight to the importance of the *triumphalia* over the passage of the law.

While the date of the *triumphalia* and the soon passage of the law were not the same, from the Roman perspective, this distinction might not have mattered. At this point in the empire's history what mattered was what the emperor wanted, the Senate was entirely subservient to him. From the perspective of those whose civilization is founded upon law, particularly the Jews, the law regarding the

co-regency spelling out Tiberius' rule over the provinces, including Israel, might have defined the start of his reign.

If the co-regency started during the period beginning with the *triumphalia* on October 23, A.D. 11 through the passage of the law on or before January 16, A.D. 12, then Tiberius' 15th year of reign is in alignment with Luke 3:1 regarding the start of the ministry of John the Baptist early in A.D 26.

> Now in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar… the word of God came to John…
> (Luke 3:1-2a)

Being so close in time, both these points match the dating of Tiberius' reign inscribed on the *prutot* coins examined in the appendix: "**Of Titles and Coins**."

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Of Titles and Coins
(coin images in this appendix are not their actual size)

Titles and Names

How the Use of Titles Affects the Understanding of Tiberius' Reign

Countermarks as Evidence Titles on Coins Can Be Used to Prove Tiberius' Reign Began before He Was "Augustus," and the Distinction Mattered

The Coins of the Syrian Region that Carry Double-dating Marking Octavian's Victory at the Battle of Actium as Well as the Years of Tiberius' Reign

Tiberius' Hatred for His Mother

Pilate's Hatred for the Jews

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Titles and Names

It might seem the titles and powers of the ruler of the Roman empire and the coins that record them would be beyond the scope of this book. Yet they are not. Believing Dr. Allen and Mary Whanger and others correctly identify the presence of *prutah* coins over the eyes of Christ on the Shroud of Turin, it becomes necessary to examine the discrepancy in the dating of some coins in this work and how others have dated them. While there were two varieties of *prutah* coins whose images are discussed as possibly being on the shroud, both were minted in Tiberius 16. This appendix is dedicated to examining what year Tiberius' 16th year of reign was based upon the current calendar of western civilization.

To put it bluntly, if the belief the year "of Tiberius" is equal with the year Tiberius became "*Augustus Caesar*," then this book has the coins over the eyes of the body of Christ in a tomb before they were minted. However, if the numbering of the year "of Tiberius" is correctly based upon Tiberius' reigning as co-regent, then the information scholars assert exists from the coins burned into the Shroud of Turin is yet another reinforcement of the dating in this volume.

This appendix will examine *prutah* coins. Further, it will examine Roman titles and their use and meaning on coins. This information is vital because the titles of the ruler of the empire can be an important part of the process of dating Roman coins which is in turn important to this study. This appendix will also examine other coins which shed light on the year "Tiberius 16." Lastly, and most convincingly, it will consider other historical facts that clearly define, based upon the content of one of the *prutah* coins, the point after which the coin could not have been minted. This information will lock in the correct understanding of what year Tiberius 16 was based upon the current calendar.

Much of what politicians do is rooted in manipulating public perception so they can achieve their desired ends. This deception was as true in the Roman Empire during the first century A.D. as it is today. The titles and the function of governance within the empire were a labyrinth of propaganda, making the deciphering of Roman history challenging.[1]

For example, Augustus' name was intended to convey super-human status, yet Augustus attempted to portray himself as the humble "restorer of the Republic" who refused to have titles permanently bestowed upon him. Rather, he had them given periodically by the Senate to present the illusion he was under Senatorial authority, just as the leaders of the early republic. This practice was deceptive. The Senate passed measures granting the

emperor titles and power because that was his desire. Sometimes the Senate passed titles for an emperor in an attempt to curry favor with him. Yet titles and offices passed by the Senate did not automatically get accepted and added to the moniker of the ruler. The practice of the Senate was to approve a number of titles or recognitions at a time so the emperor could choose the ones he preferred.[2]

The Senate did not control the emperor; the emperor controlled the Senate.[3] The emperor made appointments to the Senate or could arrange the removal of a senator. He increased the number of members in the body so he could stack it with friends or decreased its size to make it more manageable. The emperor appointed the consuls who led the Senate for a year. These were often personal friends, family, heirs, or himself. He normally appointed two consuls, as was the custom. Occasionally, as in A.D. 31 and A.D. 40, the emperor appointed just himself to be consul.

Consider what would have happened to a senator who balked at granting a title or power the emperor wanted. Standing in the way of the emperor would not have been successful or a healthy decision. It was even dangerous to be too rich. Sextus Marius had false charges invented by Tiberius so the emperor could have him killed in order to steal his money "legally."[4] It would have been suicidal to openly challenge an emperor or his words. A citizen was literally required to worship the emperor on command or face dire consequences. This demand for worship was thus a quick test to identify Christians, as they refused to offer incense to the emperor. In later decades, these "disloyal citizens" would often be used to populate the arena with victims.

The titles chosen by the emperors for themselves, and their associated powers, were limitless. No matter how one glamorizes Roman history in the age of the *caesars*, it was a dictatorship. It was cold, cruel, greedy, corrupt, and

often, a perverted dictatorship. These dictators needed a vehicle for their propaganda. Coins were the best media for them to use.

It should not be a surprise coins would serve as a vehicle for historical information and dating. Before the invention of the printing press, politicians did not have many ways to communicate messages efficiently to the populace. Coins were mobile announcements reaching the hands of citizens throughout the empire. Coin designs were, therefore, the result of deliberate political strategy. They were the objects used by politicians to give a positive spin to the events of their reign.[5] Numismatist Michael Grant says, "The initiative in issuing coinage came from the emperor; and either he or one of his advisers chose the designs, or at least gave general directions concerning them."[6]

What is important to this study is the fact coins were used to proclaim when a new ruler ascended the throne, or when a current ruler had a new title, or an expanded role within the empire.[7] Communicating through coinage, although cumbersome compared to modern technology, provided lasting testaments for those who want to decipher the timing of a change in leadership.[8] It is, however, necessary for a student of history to understand the following titles for the rulers of Rome to discern their significance on coinage.

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Although significant in their power, these first three titles were not commonly used on Roman coinage.

Censor

Censor was a name given to a person with responsibility for the counting of citizens, taxation authority

corresponding to a census, overseeing public morality, and the leasing of public property. The word *censor* is the root word of "censorship" or the guarding of the public from immorality.[9] Dio adds this information concerning the office of *censor*:

> … by virtue of holding the censorship they investigate our lives and morals as well as take the census, enrolling some in the equestrian and senatorial classes and erasing the names of others from these classes, according to their will.[10]

Augustus never takes this title upon himself, although he carried out its duties.[11]

Consul

Consul was the title for the leader of the Senate who drafted the laws of the empire. This “supreme magistrate of the Roman Republic” later became more of a title of honor that nevertheless required work and personal wealth.[12]

Princeps

Princeps means first. This title was an attempt to be “one of the people,” while maintaining status as being the first or greatest of the people. The Oxford Classical Dictionary says,

> Augustus’ choice of the word *princeps* to designate his position was typical of his respect for tradition; it contrasted strongly with the Dictatorship and the suspected monarchical intentions of Caesar and, in indicating an unquestioned but not a narrowly defined or clearly determined primacy.[13]

Augustus is quoted as saying regarding the title, "I excelled all in influence, although I possessed no more official power than others who were my colleagues in the various magistracies."[14]

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The following five titles for the ruler of the empire were commonly used on coinage. Each has a nuance of meaning that can provide dating information.

Caesar

Caesar became a moniker for the "monarchy" of Roman leaders. Many assume the title *caesar* was an exclusive term for the all-powerful lone ruler of the Roman empire. This understanding is incorrect. The title was given to heirs of the throne and became part of the name or title of the person. During the reign of Augustus, for example, there was a time when four people had the title/moniker *caesar*. Augustus, Tiberius who was given it along with his brother before his brother's death, and Augustus' two grandsons whom he adopted as sons and marked as heirs to the throne when Tiberius fell out of favor.

Such adoption of sons, along with the marking of them as an heir with the title *caesar*, is reflected on coins.[15] To be *caesar* was to be the ruler, **or** to be in line for the throne by the decision of the ruler. Yet to be a *caesar* did not mean one had unlimited power as an emperor.

Imperator

During the years of the Republic, the word *imperator* simply meant ruler, and was always attached to a geographic area, or an area of responsibility. According to historian Theodor Mommsen, Julius Caesar altered the

way the word was sometimes used. He made the title *imperator,* when used without limiting distinctions, universal and unlimited. He made this title synonymous with emperor.[16] It became known as the *imperium maius,* and with limited exceptions, was restricted to use by the emperor.[17] *Maius* means greater or larger.

Completing the transition begun by Julius Caesar, from Augustus' reign forward, the title *imperator* was to carry the power and authority of the throne. Being an *imperator* did not mean someone was necessarily the lone or the highest ruler of the empire. Yet, these powers had no limit, as long as they were used in harmony with the will of the supreme ruler. To disobey or disrespect an *imperator* was to do so to the chief ruler and ultimately the full authority of the empire. Dio writes of Augustus and this title in 29 B.C.:

> And he assumed the title of *imperator.* I do not here refer to the title which had occasionally been bestowed, in accordance with the ancient custom, upon generals in recognition of their victories - for he had received that many times before this and received it many times afterwards in honor merely of his achievements, so that he won the name of *imperator* twenty-one times - but rather the title in its other use, which signifies the possession of the supreme power, in which sense it had been voted to his father Caesar and to the children and descendants of Caesar.[18]

Julius Caesar had claimed and expanded the meaning of *imperator*. Augustus then asserted it passed down to him through lineage.[19] It was a word that combined the prior title *dictator perpetuus*, and *pontifex maximus. Dictator perpetuus* meant having absolute political power. *Pontifex maximus* meant absolute authority over religious matters. Merging these two offices was a declaration of authority over all matters within the empire. It meant the emperor

had ultimate and absolute authority both within the city of Rome and in the territories beyond.[20] Not satisfied with just exercising power over the religious affairs of the empire, Augustus would later assume the actual title of *pontifex maximus*.

Although Augustus, and later Tiberius, believed it was their due to be *imperator* as an inheritance,[21] in order to appear a servant of the people and not a dictator, the title *imperator* was bestowed upon them by the Senate for periods of five or ten years at a time. Yet *imperator* was not good enough for Octavian (Augustus) when he assumed the throne. Nor was it the ultimate title in the mind of Roman leadership. *Imperator* was not a title restricted to one man. Although containing absolute power, more than one person at a time could hold the title *Imperator* as Augustus shared the title with others before his sole rule began and afterwards.

Pontifex Maximus

The *Pontifex Maximus* was the "high priest" of all religion in the Roman Empire. He was the ultimate ruler of what was acceptable religion and religious practice within the empire. Dio makes the point the title of *pontifex maximus* was superior in one sense to *imperator*. The title marked the ultimate ruler as there was only one *pontifex maximus* while there could be more than one *imperator* at a time. Augustus assumed the title of *pontifex maximus* in 12 B.C. Dio says:

> By virtue of being consecrated in all the priesthoods and of their right to bestow most of these positions upon others, as well as from the fact that, even if two or three persons hold the imperial office at the same time, one of them is high priest, they hold in their own hands supreme authority over all matters both profane and sacred.[22]

Tribunicia potestate

After assuming the title of *imperator* in 43 B.C., becoming the sole ruler in 31 B.C. and **before** becoming *pontifex maximus* in 12 B.C., Augustus garnered another title representing great power and carrying much symbolic meaning. In 23 B.C., during Augustus' eighth year as sole ruler of the empire, he arranged to have a new title added to him that was an altered old one.

This new title had been used under the Republic for selected prominent members of the *plebian* class. Having members of the *plebian* class carry such authority was a guarantee common people would not be oppressed by the elites. Now this power, previously used as a grant of honor and authority to commoners, was being taken by the emperor. However, where it was to be held for a short time by an individual, Augustus makes it an annual renewal to himself by the Senate beginning in 23 B.C. This empowerment was the *tribunicia potestate* or *tribunician* powers as Dio describes them:

> The Tribunician powers, as it is called, which used to be conferred only upon men of the greatest influence, gives them the right to nullify the effects of measures taken by any other official, in case they do not approve it, and makes them immune from scurrilous abuse; and if they appear to be wronged in even the slightest degree, not merely by deed, but even by word, they may destroy the guilty party, as one accused, without a trial. The emperors, it should be explained, do not think it right to be tribunes, inasmuch as they belong altogether to the patrician class, but they assume the power of the tribunes to its full extent, as it was when it was greatest; and in numbering the years they have held the imperial office they use the tribunician power to mark the stages, the theory

> being that they received it year by year along with those who are regularly made tribunes.[23]

Having these powers conferred by this title was a way for the emperor to draw to himself the magisterial powers possessed in the early Republic by "tribunes" of the plebeian class. A member of the ruling class was not previously entitled to these powers. These powers were extreme but had been limited to a short period of time or location. Drawing them to himself on an annual basis, and being in force throughout the empire, was to give himself limitless power through the use of a traditionally accepted word or title. For purposes of chronology, the title proves quite valuable. The year by year installment of the title beginning July 1 of 23 B.C. allows for clear dating of the year of a coin's minting, due to the designation of a specific year of an emperor's *tribunician* powers.

Pater Patriae

In 2 B.C. Augustus took on one more title. He would not pass on this title to others. He became the *pater patriae,* the "father of the nation."[24] No additional power was associated with the new title, nevertheless, the psychological ploy is obvious. By accepting this title, Augustus was standing in the place of the founder of Rome, Romulus.[25] Since the title was also used for the gods, it makes Augustus almost super-human.[26] In many ancient societies fathers could determine whether children lived or died. Such power continued even into the child's adulthood. The Old Testament carried such force with accompanying instructions found in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Roman law allotted such power. Augustus was tapping into this psychological power and drawing it to himself. He understood influence and psychological control are sometimes as effective as raw power.[27]

Augustus (as a title)

Augustus' last title, *pater patriae*, was in one sense a replay of the one he claimed to himself and asserted was his greatest title.[28] He believed his greatest title was a priceless inheritance to be awarded to his heirs to the throne. This greatest title was the name Augustus, which he had claimed for himself. That name, "Augustus" along with the title *pater patriae* were both rooted in mind control.

The Latin root word from whence "Augustus" came was "augury" which was to discern the will of the gods. The perception a leader knows the will of the gods, creates the illusion his actions were the will of the gods and were directed by their authority. Such a leader must be obeyed lest the wrath of the gods be incurred. What could be more powerful than to speak for the gods?

Further, the title of "Augustus" carried religious connotations of being greater than a normal man. He was "great," "magnificent," and "venerable," meaning "worthy of veneration." Veneration means to worship or to have respect for, as in places of worship consecrated by augury, the root word for his name. His name asserted he was due, not only obedience, but also worship. Here is how Dio records Octavian's name becoming Augustus.

> And when Caesar had actually carried out his promises, the name Augustus was at length bestowed upon him by the senate and by the people…and [he] took the title of "Augustus," signifying that he was more than human; for all the most precious and sacred objects are termed augusta. Therefore, they addressed him also in Greek as *Sebastos*, meaning an august personage, from the passive of the verb *sebazo*, "to revere." In this way the power of both people and senate passed entirely into the hands of Augustus, and from his time there was, strictly

> speaking, a monarch; for monarchy would be the truest name for it, no matter if two or three men did later hold the power at the same time.[29]

The title "augustus" when used as a name was more than a power grab of carnal powers, as was seizing the *tribunician* powers. It was more than an attempt to acquire sacred authority, as was becoming *pontifex maximus*. Becoming "Augustus," Octavian wanted the people to consider him in essence a spokesman for the gods, a meaning contained within his name. Because of its meaning, Octavian believed "augustus" was the greatest title of all the titles he, or any other ruler of Rome, could claim. He received this title upon acquiring sole rule and had it passed down to his heirs upon his death.

The confluence of these titles and powers meant the emperor had the power to nullify or ignore any and all laws within the empire. He had the power to decree a death sentence on anyone by his own authority for the smallest slight, without the possibility of appeal. He could do virtually anything he wanted. He was the supreme military, political, and religious authority, and one who claimed to be a spokesman for the gods, as well as being a son of a god – which he also claimed due to being the son of "god" Julius Ceasar. Does that sound like a dictator? Yes, it does, and then some! This level of power can boggle the mind of someone from a free society. Again, the issue at hand is: status as reflected by titles on Roman coins can be used to provide crucial timing information.

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Consideration will now be given to several specific Roman coins minted during the reign of Augustus and the beginning of the reign of Tiberius. Again, notations on coinage marking a certain year of *tribunician* powers or powers as *imperator* can be used to identify specific years within the reigns of emperors. These markers, however,

predate the co-regency of Augustus and Tiberius since these powers were held by Tiberius long before he began to reign as co-regent. The titles marking the ascendancy to the throne by Tiberius, and later Emperor Titus as well, were: *augustus* or *pontifex maximus, or princeps*. Since the goal of this text is to learn the chronology related to Christ, focus must be placed upon the reign of Tiberius referenced on coins that shed light on the dating identified in Luke 3:1.

One can dispute when coins might have marked the inception of the reign of Tiberius within the city of Rome since the law passed by the Senate in late A.D. 11 or early A.D. 12 reserved the leadership of the city to Augustus. Some might also wish to debate whether the noted Senate law gave Tiberius control of the provinces that were specifically **senatorial** provinces. However, regarding the province of Syria, which included Israel, or the other imperial provinces, there is no doubt. Tiberius' reign over these areas began with the passage of the law making him co-regent with direct authority over the provinces, although Tiberius did not yet possess the titles of *pontifex maximus* or *augustus* or *princeps*. It should not be a surprise coins minted from the passage of the co-regency law, at least in imperial provinces, would have acknowledged Tiberius as reigning. This understanding will be proven as examples of how Tiberius' reign is identified on specific Roman coins will be examined next.

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How the Use of Titles Affects the Understanding of Tiberius' Reign

With Augustus' demise, his will directed the title "*augustus*" be passed on to his adopted son Tiberius, and Julia/Livia, who was Augustus' wife and Tiberius' mother. They received this title/name as a reflection of Augustus' desire for each of them to receive portions of the power of

the throne. Tiberius was to receive 2/3 of the power and Julia/Livia was to receive 1/3.[30] As stated, when the Senate wanted to bestow on Tiberius an additional name in recognition of his military victory in Pannonia, Augustus refused each of three titles/names saying the name he had instructed to be given Tiberius upon his death was enough.[31] That name was to be "Augustus."

Although the name was seldom used by Tiberius, it nevertheless became a part of his and Julia's regnal name when Augustus died. The addition of the name/title of Augustus to Tiberius, and later to Emperor Titus, which will be examined shortly, impacts the dating of Roman coins during the first century A.D. affecting chronology.

Regarding Tiberius and later Titus, the difference between three terms just discussed - *caesar*, *imperator*, and *augustus* - allows for discernment whether they reigned as a co-regent, or whether their reign as supreme ruler had begun. Again, the title *caesar* **could** be used to designate a ruler of the empire, as it often does on coins. Nevertheless, it **did not necessarily** mean they were ruling the empire. This is similar to what has been said about the title *imperator*. An *imperator* **did** carry great authority within the empire. Yet carrying the title *imperator* **did not necessarily** mean someone was the chief ruler of the empire. However, once Augustus had the law passed making Tiberius a co-regent with him, Tiberius' standing as an *imperator* and *caesar* carried additional standing. At that point he not only represented Augustus' authority, he also carried authority as ruler in and of himself.

As has been discussed, Tiberius' reigning alongside Augustus as co-regent was the will of Augustus. The co-regency was established formally by a decree and later by a law passed by the Senate in late A.D. 11 or early January A.D. 12 (henceforth referred to as A.D. 12). Tiberius' actions demonstrated his reign began with his co-regency through his exercising the power of political appointments. The appendix, **"The Dating of Tiberius'**

Co-Regency" contains additional proof Tiberius understood he had authority as a co-ruler and utilized his power, at least after the passage of the law empowering him to rule alongside Augustus with direct control of the provinces.

Having already begun to reign, Tiberius was dismissive and resistant when the Senate wanted to give him power in September A.D. 14 after the demise of Augustus. Some have suggested Tiberius resisted the Senate because he did not want to be emperor. If Tiberius were to abdicate power at that point, his life and the lives of those closest to him would have forever been in jeopardy because they would have been viewed as a threat to the throne. Just like Augustus, who believed his rights were inherited, Tiberius no doubt believed he was due by inheritance the titles of leadership, except *pater patriae*. He already had full authority and was doing the job of emperor. With the passing of Augustus, by default he became the supreme ruler of the empire. Yet he, and every other informed Roman, understood he carried all the power of an emperor since joining his father in the co-regency.[32]

Some suggest Tiberius wanted to be begged by the Senate to accept the job after Augustus death. This position is an assumption. It is possible Tiberius considered the Senate's re-investment of power in him to be unnecessary and perhaps even insulting. If this suggestion is correct, Tiberius' attitude was consistent with his adopted father's attitude. Augustus resisted being given the title *imperator* by the Senate since, as stated, he asserted it was due him upon ascension to the throne.

For a week Tiberius resisted the Senate's desire to (re) install him as ruler until they begged him to allow them to give him (or re-recognize his) power. Perhaps, the Senate's power itself to bestow Tiberius' authority might have been the true issue causing the delay. Tiberius likely believed the action of the Senate to "appoint" him (again) was not for Tiberius' sake or for the sake of the empire, but rather

so the Senate could look relevant. The deception of senatorial power, which Augustus nurtured, may have seemed unnecessary at this point to Tiberius. He barely tolerated the charade.

After inheriting the name/title "Augustus," Tiberius generally avoided its use. Nevertheless, the new name/title was used on coins to communicate his new role as chief ruler. Yet considering Tiberius' attitude toward the Senate's vote in September of A.D. 14, it is clear Tiberius did not believe it was appropriate to mark the inception of his reign from that point. He was satisfied his reign began with his co-regency with Augustus. Since coinage was approved by the emperor or his designee, his understanding of the beginning of his reign naturally became the timing reflected on coins, although there is one exception to be noted shortly. Those disagreeing bear the responsibility to prove otherwise.

Luke, the Gospel writer, dates Tiberius' *hēgemoneuontos* (rulership) over Israel with his co-regency in A.D. 12. The empire dated Tiberius' powers from his reigning with Augustus as can be seen from ancient authors and the authority Tiberius exercised from A.D. 12. As will be shown, the Roman coins placed over the eyes of Christ, mark the reign of Tiberius from his co-regency in A.D. 12; and, when understood correctly, provide clarification he became the ultimate leader as "Augustus" in A.D. 14.

Cohen, Egbert, and Cagnat's instructions on the meaning of Latin terms on coin-inscriptions contained in their book *The Coin- Inscriptions and Epigraphical Abbreviations of IMPERIAL ROME*,[33] are reflected in the coin analysis which follows. The website: WildWinds.com also provides clarity on the titling of the ruler of the Roman empire and the nomenclature related to co-regencies through the coinage of Emperor Titus. WildWinds.com breaks their Titus coins into categories. The first nine years of coins during Titus' reign are identified as "Titus as *Caesar*." This identification is because during this nine-year co-regency

period Titus was *Caesar* and *Imperator*. His still living father, Vespasian, was "Augustus." The Titus coins from A.D. 79-81, after the death of his father Vespasian, are identified by WildWinds.com as "Titus as Augustus." Some have suggested a co-regent was a "crowned prince" marked and waiting for ascension to the throne. This description suits the term "*caesar*," not "co-regent."

A Roman co-regent had the full and absolute power of the supreme ruler to channel his will and power. Travel limitations and slow communications made an empowered partner invaluable. Part of the reason Vespasian's troops pushed him to become emperor was because his son Titus would also be able to rule along with him.[34] To refer to Titus as *caesar*, *imperator*, or to say it was such and such year of Titus, meaning "of his reign," would be correct **before** he was "*augustus*" since he was co-regent with Vespasian.[35] This situation was similar to Augustus' action with Tiberius.

As Augustus was losing strength and approaching death he and the Senate added Tiberius as a co-regent so Tiberius could care for government outside the city of Rome and aid in other responsibilities as well. A crowned prince does not have the right to exercise power. A co-regent, such as Tiberius and Titus, did share unlimited power with the supreme ruler.

Vespasian and his son Titus came to power as the fourth rulership in one year, A.D. 69. It was a year of confusion and civil war. It was in their interest and the empire's interest to reestablish stability. One of the highest priorities of the new administration was to convince the realm they were not self-seeking interlopers. Rather, they came to power to restore the empire to its legitimate roots as reflected in its good *caesars*. Part of this effort was Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian, intentionally restoring the titles on the coins used during Augustus' reign.[36]

Since Vespasian and Titus were intentionally restoring Augustus/Tiberius coinage, the logical conclusion is they wanted their co-regency to be a reflection of Augustus and Tiberius' co-regency in coinage. Vespasian and Titus succeeded. The relationship and power reflected on the coinage of Vespasian and Titus parallels Augustus and Tiberius. This understanding, only three decades removed from Tiberius' reign, reinforces how Romans of the first century regarded co-regencies and the titles reflecting the powers involved.

During the period of Augustus and Tiberius' co-regency A.D. 12 - A.D. 14 Tiberius appears as *Imperator* and *Caesar* on coinage, where Augustus (Octavian) is referred to as Augustus (ruler). For example, the coin identified as RIC 0224 (Lyon 88 or RSC 2) is presented here:

Augustus

Tiberius in chariot

CAESAR AVGVSSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRAE
CAESAR AVGVSSTVS {Caesar Augustus}
DIVI {meaning deity or blessed dead of imperial family}
F {son of} {meaning "son of god" – Julius Caesar}
PATER PATRAE {Father of the Nation)

TI CAESAR AVG F TR POT XV
TI CAESAR {Tiberius Caesar}
AVG F {son of Augustus}
TR POT {Tribunicia Potestate - unchallengeable powers}
XV {15th year - July 1 A.D. 13 – June 30 A.D. 14}[37]

Image courtesy of WildWinds.com:
CNG Triton XI, Lot 862, Jan. 2008

Tiberius Goddess pex

Once Augustus

TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS
TI CAESAR {Tiberius Caesar}
DIVI AVG F
{son of Augustus - blessed dead of imperial family}
AVGVSTVS {Augustus}

PONTIF MAXIM {Pontifex Maximus}

Image courtesy of WildWinds.com:
CNG Triton VIII, Lot 1090, Jan. 2005

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Countermarks as Evidence that Titles on Coins Can Be Used to Prove Tiberius' Reign Began before He Was "Augustus," and that the Distinction Mattered

There is an interesting phenomenon reflecting the change in titles from being **a** ruler to being **the** supreme ruler of the empire. This phenomenon is called "countermarks." Countermarks are markings stamped into a coin to add or alter information. Since many readers probably have never heard of countermarks, here is some basic information about them:

1) Coins with these marks were legal tender throughout the empire.[38]

2) These modifications to coins were sometimes done to correct/update the title of a ruler or recognize a new authority level.[39]

3) There is uncertainty as to when many countermarks were done.[40]

4) Due to some rulers being named after each other and the limited space on a coin confusion exists regarding the person identified by some countermarks.[41]

5) Most important to this study, 80% of countermarking on "as" coins from Augustus to Nero involve the name Tiberius or Augustus.[42]

While it is true some of the large number of Tiberius or Augustus countermarks refer to a later emperor, Tiberius Claudius Augustus, there are also many that refer to the first Augustus (Octavian) and his adopted son Tiberius. The pertinent issue for this study is what can be learned from the markings related to Augustus and Tiberius that sheds light on chronology.

Theories have been developed that have failed the evidence of history.[43] Other theories have been suggested that do not even satisfy the scholars who promulgated them as possibilities.[44] Yet scholars allow many of the "as" countermarks could have been an attempt to add information and standing to Tiberius.[45] There are a few often repeated occurrences pointing to the topic of this study drawing special comment by numismatist Harold Mattingly, he refers to them saying:

> Here is one apparent absurdity, well authenticated. The mark IMP. AVG. is quite frequently found over TIB. IMP. or TIB. AVG. –

an obvious absurdity if the former stands for Augustus, the latter for Tiberius.[46]

In other words, Mattingly is saying these countermarks cannot be understood to be an attempt to mark Augustus (Octavian) as a successor to Tiberius, therefore, they carry some other meaning. Mattingly goes on to mention some theories concerning this phenomenon which, to his mind, do not satisfy the question.[47]

This writer is convinced these overlays of "IMP AVG" (meaning Caesar Augustus) on these coins carrying Tiberius' face have everything to do with the topic of this book. For two years before Augustus' death in the fall of A.D. 14 Tiberius was a *caesar* and he was an *imperator,* yet he was ruling. Many of these Tiberius coins were minted during the co-regency, celebrating his accession to that position.

With the demise of his father Augustus, Tiberius gained the name/title "*augustus*" and became the supreme ruler. It adds to his status and to the stability of the empire to take the trouble of making sure everyone who sees these coins knows Tiberius is now **the** supreme ruler. This theory makes practical sense and reinforces the meaning of the lettering on the coins.

TIB IMP = Tiberius *Imperator* = a title consistent with his being one of the emperors

TIB AVG = Tiberius *Augustalis* = of (the family of) Augustus[48]

covered over by the countermark

IMP AVG = *Imperator* Augustus = the emperor who has ultimate power as supreme ruler

It seems the coins carrying this countermark were originally minted before the death of Augustus (Octavian)

while Tiberius was ruling with him. The countermarks carrying the distinction "IMP AVG" were overlaid after Augustus' death and Tiberius' ascension to supreme ruler.[49]

This logical conclusion adds weight to the position coins bearing similar marks recognizing the reign "of Tiberius" without the designation of "Augustus Caesar" were marking his reign year by year from the inception of his co-regency. Remember, the *prutot* coins in question from Tiberius 16 were minted over a decade later by people who were instructed by Tiberius' administration and/or by those seeking Tiberius' favor.

Wouldn't it add status to Tiberius to recognize the length of his reign from his authority during the co-regency? One could also analyze the question another way. Which is better: to share all the power that began in A.D. 12; or to be recognized as having 2/3 of the power as directed by Augustus' will after his death in A.D. 14? Think of the situation as this choice. Is it preferable to have a partnership with someone who intends to retire and establishes a bank account where only one partner's signature controls all the assets, or own 2/3 of a company where despite having ultimate control, it is necessary to tolerate the input of the 1/3 owner who is insufferable? Considered this way, one could question whether Tiberius' power increased at all with his rise to "Augustus." Perhaps Tiberius longed for the good-old-days when he worked with the father he loved, instead of dealing with a mother he disliked.

Additionally, if it was Tiberius' desire to diminish the recognition of Julia/Livia having 1/3 of the power, it would be wise for him to structure coinage to mark his reign from a point before she had such power. As will be seen, Tiberius loathed Julia/Livia sharing power with him and eventually forbade her from receiving honors such as her name appearing on coinage. Based upon how the emperor's titles appeared on the coins in the first century

A.D. and when Tiberius became co-regent with Augustus, Tiberius 16 is A. D. 26-27 using Syrian regnal dating and A.D. 27 based upon actual dating, with one exception.

***

The Coins of the Syrian Region that Carry Double-dating Marking Octavian's Victory at the Battle of Actium as Well as the Years of Tiberius' Reign

There were coins minted in Antioch (RPC 4270 and RPC 4271) that have the head of Tiberius on one side and two apparent date markings on the other. They have an "EM" marking the 45th year from Octavian's (Augustus) victory at Actium along with an "A" likely meaning "1" [50] and referring to the beginning of Tiberius' reign as "Augustus."

Numismatist Josepho Eckhel records and Rev. William Cuninghame discusses an "A" or "1" on Tiberius coins minted in Antioch marked "Γ M" (43rd year of Actium) and "ΔM" (44th year of Actium).[51] (Please note, Greek letter dating is not the same as the Roman numeral mathematical system where a smaller number to the left subtracts from the larger number to its right.) While there is debate whether the coins are genuine, some believe the coin dated 43rd year of Actium refers to the first year of Tiberius' co-regency, and the coin dated the 44th year of Actium likely refers to the first year of the reign of the new Syrian governor Silanus.[52] Silanus was a very significant figure. He was a consul in A.D. 7[53] before becoming Governor of the Syrian region from A.D. 13-17.[54] His daughter was for a time engaged to Nero, the eldest son of Germanicus, who was Tiberius' adopted son and heir to the throne until his death.[55]

Assuming the coins in question are legitimate, it is logical to accept the analysis of those who believe the meaning of the "A" on these coins from the three years of Actium 43, 44, and 45 refer to:

1) The beginning of Tiberius' co-regency (year 43 of Actium, September 17 of A.D. 11 – through October 5 of A.D. 12 Macedonian calendar of the Syrian Region);

2) The beginning of Silanus' reign (year 44 of Actium, A.D. 12/13);

3) The beginning of Tiberius as Augustus (year 45 of Actium, A.D. 13/14).

This position is validated by double-dated coins from Actium year 47, "ZM."[56] The coin from Actium year 47 also has a "Γ " (a Gamma which means three). This "three" matches the fact it was the third regnal year of Tiberius reign as Augustus in the Syrian Province using the timing of G. F. Hill discussed later. While it is true Zeta, "Z," is the sixth letter of the Greek alphabet, the numbering system based on the Greek alphabet dates to a time when there were three additional letters in that alphabet. At that time an extinct sixth letter moved the "Z" to the seventh position.[57]

The following coin is identified as RPC 4330 minted in Seleukia – Pieria, a mint in the Syrian Province. It is essentially identical to RPC 4370V minted in Antioch. Both these coins show the double-date of "Γ" = 3 and "ZM" = 47. They were minted in Julian year A.D. 15/16 during the 47th year of the Actium era as counted in the Syrian Province' Macedonian calendar. Notice the wording for these coins is in Greek instead of Latin.

WildWinds.com has permitted the use of this and several other coin images that follow. Their kindness and generosity is received with great gratitude.

Tiberius wreath

ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΡ (Greek)
SEBASTOS SEBASTOY KAISAR - Venerable Augustus Caesar

Γ (Gamma = number three) {In the third year}
ΕΡΙ ΣΙ ΛΑΝΟΥ ΑΝΤΙΟ ΧΕΩΝ
of his authority over Antioch - area {Syrian Province}
ZM (Z= seven M = 40 or year 47)
{during year 47 of Actium}

Image courtesy of WildWinds.com:
CNG auction 203, Lot 400, Jan. 2009

Some have suggested the existence of these double-dated coins proves Tiberius' reign is always marked from his being "Augustus" after Octavian's (Augustus) death. This conclusion seems in error. If Tiberius had wanted his reign counted from his being "Augustus" instead of the co-regency this double-dating would have continued. Rather, the double-dating disappears, and the next coins minted in the region are dated using other means.

Prudence demands allowance that the "A" on the Actium 43, 44, or 45 coins might not be intended to reflect a number. Some have suggested the "A" could mean the coins were produced in the mint of Antioch. Others suggest the "A" is a nod of respect to the city of Antioch itself, as the provincial capital. Although reasonable to consider, the fact the Actium 47 coin was minted both in Antioch and in Seleucia, also in the Syrian region, adds

credence to "A" meaning "1."[58] Also, since the " Γ " on those coins is clearly a gamma reflecting the number three and it appears on the same location on the coins, it would seem the strongest position is the "A" references the number one. With the additional knowledge and perspective provided by the other coins, the double-dated coins do not refute the chronology presented in this work. Rather, they support it. If, however, the "A" on the coins has nothing to do with the number one, then the coins simply do not relate to chronology and have no bearing on this study.

It will be helpful to consider now specific information of how the dating of coins for the Actium era and the reigns of rulers were dated in the Syrian Province. Then several reasons will be provided to demonstrate why it is incorrect to assume the *prutot* coins of Judea were dated from Tiberius as Augustus as were some of the coins of the Actium era minted in Syria.

What about the "Star of Bethlehem" Coins?

Do not be confused by the so called "Star of Bethlehem" coins minted in Antioch. Versions of this coin were minted in the Syrian region for several years near the period around the beginning of Tiberius' reign. Michael R. Molnar gives a thorough treatment to the issue and explains what is on the coins. His analysis makes it very clear these coins have no relationship to the inception of Tiberius' reign, nor do they have anything to do with the birth of Christ.[59] Molnar's book, *The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi*, points out the name attached to the coins is due to the coins' time of minting and the region from whence they came as well as the presence of a ram and a star on the coins, Molnar makes it clear these are coincidental.

The dating of Roman coins suggested by this book is built upon the work of numismatist, G. F. Hill, the late director and principal Librarian of the Department of Coins and Medals of the British Museum. He addresses dating of coinage from major events. He explains how dating from Octavian's victory at Actium in the provinces requires understanding how regnal years would be counted from such an event. G. F. Hill states, "The dates, when they do occur (on coins) are computed according to eras or regnal years."[60] Whereas, after Augustus to Trajan, Rome counted years of reign from the date of ascension.[61] Hill explains how era or regnal years should be computed in the provinces:

> It is necessary, however, to remember that an era was not always computed from the actual date at which epoch-making events happened, but the current year in which it happened was often regarded as the first year of the new era. Thus, in that part of the world where the year began in September, if the event happened in June, A.D. 30, the first year of the new era would probably run from September A.D. 29 to September A.D. 30.[62]

Using Hill's guidance, the following chart demonstrates the years of Actium and their concurrent regnal years of Tiberius as Augustus in the Syrian Province.

Crucial Years to This Study in the Macedonian Calendar Used in the Syrian Province
(years begin with 1 *Tishrei*)[63]

Macedonian Calendar Year	Year of Actium Era
Oct. 1, 32 B.C. - Sept. 18, 31 B.C	first year of Actium
(Octavian's Sole Reign Is Recognized with His Victory at the Battle of Actium, Sept. 2 of 31 B.C.)	
Sept. 27, A.D. 10 - Sept. 16, A.D. 11	42nd year of Actium
Senatorial Decree Regarding Co-regency in August, in Preparation for the *Triumphalia* and the Law that Happened the Next Year	
Sept. 17, A.D. 11 – Oct. 5, A.D. 12	43rd year of Actium
Tiberius' Co-regency/Year of Reign 1	
Oct. 6, A.D. 12 - Sept. 24, A.D. 13	44nd year of Actium
Tiberius' Co-regency/Year of Reign 2	
Sept. 25, A.D. 13 - Sept. 12, A.D. 14	45th year of Actium
Tiberius Augustus 1, Reign Including Co-regency 3	
Augustus' demise on August 19, of A.D. 14	
Sept. 13, A.D.14 – Oct. 2, A.D. 15	46th year of Actium
Tiberius Augustus 2, reign including co-regency 4	
Oct. 3, A.D. 15 - Sept 20, A.D. 16	47th year of Actium
Tiberius Augustus 3, Reign Including Co-regency 5	
Sept. 11, A.D. 25 - Sept. 29, A.D. 26	57th year of Actium
Tiberius Augustus 13, Reign Including Co-regency 15	
Year when John the Baptist baptized Christ	
Sept. 30, A.D. 26 - Sept. 19, A.D. 27	58th year of Actium
Tiberius Augustus 14, Reign Including Co-regency 16	
This was the year the *prutot* were minted that covered the eyes of Christ at burial – the last year Julia/Livia honored on a prutah (Hendin 648)	

One might expect the *prutot* minted under Pontius Pilate in Judea would be consistent in the style of dating with the Actium coins from the same Roman province. Yet that is not the case. The coins minted in the Syrian region did not reflect the dates on the coins in the same manner as the *prutot* minted within Israel. The coins themselves provide four evidences their dating was different from other coins within the Syrian region.

First, the *prutot* show they are not handled with the same numbering system as used in other Syrian provincial mints. Note the Actium coins have Greek letters serving as numbers and use the Greek number system. The *prutot* use Greek numbers but use the dating system common in Egypt. Under this system, each number on a *prutah* is designated with an "L" to denote "year" followed by the Greek year number.

Second, the wording of the *prutot* does not say "Augustus" rather both Julia/Livia and Tiberius are identified by "KAICAPOC" a Greek word for "Caesar (Emperor)/Empress" meaning royalty/rulers or some shortened version of the title.[64] It appears the lack of "Augustus" is intentional allowing for the marking of Tiberius' reign from his co-regency.

Third, it seems keeping the title of Tiberius as Caesar on the *prutot* reflects the heart and mind of Tiberius. He is referred to as "Augustus" on some other coins, but *on the prutot* his reign is marked by his year of *tribunician powers*, the period of his being *imperator*, or his consulship. At the inception of his reign, he had a cooperative/respectful relationship with his mother. With the death of Augustus, he and his mother (theoretically) shared power 2/3 and 1/3. At that point Tiberius at least tolerated the semblance of sharing power and status with his mother. By the time Pilate began to reign in A.D. 26, the relationship between Tiberius and Julia/Livia had worn thin. Logic suggests the act of marking his reign from his co-regency was intended to reassert his full

authority, and de-emphasize the authority of Julia/Livia. As shown, Tiberius was fully in command as a co-regent with his father before Julia/Livia had any legal power at all. Much more will be said about the relationship between Tiberius and Julia/Livia shortly.

Fourth, the dating of *prutot* coins is marked in years "of Tiberius" that can be identified with specific rulers of Judea and recognized through the artwork on the coinage they minted. It is correct Valerius Gratus reigned as Prefect of Judea from A.D. 15-25, based upon statements made in Josephus.[65] As noted earlier, Pilate's reign is also based upon Josephus who says Pilate was removed from rule shortly before Tiberius death after Pilate served 10 years.[66] Thus, Pilate reigned from A.D. 26-36.

The challenge of dating the *prutot* properly lies in understanding which "year of Tiberius" corresponds to which year in the current calendar. Confusion has occurred due to contemporary resistance to accept or understand that a co-regent had full power to rule. Heretofore, the commonly accepted year of Tiberius' reign has been attributed errantly.

The missing piece to the puzzle regards the reign of the man who preceded Gratus. Annius Rufus ruled as Prefect of Judea from A.D. 12 through the death of Augustus in A.D. 14 and apparently for part of A.D. 15 as well. Because most superimpose the wrong years to the reigns of the prefects, they miss the fact Rufus minted *prutot* coins thus reinforcing a wrong understanding of the year of Tiberius' reign marked on coins. With Tiberius' first year of reign being A.D. 12, the *prutot* coin record comes into focus.

Prefects Coponius (A.D. 6-9) and Marcus Ambibulus (A.D. 9-12) who ruled under Augustus, had the same symbols embedded into the *prutot* – a palm branch on one side and a palm tree on the other. As Tiberius began to rule the provinces in A.D. 12, it appears he allowed freedom to

each prefect to choose artwork for their *prutot* coins. The symbols they chose mark their reigns. Understanding this marking system illuminates this study. Here are the symbols and their identifying characteristics on *prutot* coins minted by the prefects based upon the numbering system listed in David Hendin's book *Guide to Biblical Coins* published by Amphora in 1996 on pages 160-163:

Tiberius's year 1 - A.D. 11/12
from His co-regency with Augustus
no *prutah* listed in Hendin

Annius Rufus (A.D. 12-15)
obv. wreath or vine rev. artwork with symmetry
Identifying characteristic: artistic creativity

Tiberius' year 2 coins or A.D. 12/13
Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 639)

wreath

crossed cornucopias

used with permission WildWinds.com

Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 640)

wreath

palm branch

used with permission Dmitry Markov Coins and Medals

Tiberius' Year 3 Coins or A. D. 13/14

Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 641)

wreath

crossed cornucopias

used with permission WildWinds.com
ex Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles

Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 642)

wreath

three lilies

used with permission WildWinds.com - ex CNG auction May 2010

(early) Tiberius' Year 4 Coins or A.D. 14/15

Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 644)

grape vine

kantharos with handles

used with permission WildWinds.com - ex CNG Coins

Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 643)

vine with grapes

amphora with handles

used with permission WildWinds.com - and Beastcoins collection

If the conventional wisdom is correct, the previous coins were minted by Gratus. This conclusion means Gratus minted several unique beautiful coins, with separate coins each year for Tiberius and Julia/Livia, during his first three years. Then amazingly, he decided to mint stale identical coins, with both rulers on the same coin, during his last eight years. This conclusion seems to defy reason. It is more logical to conclude the previous coins were minted by Annius Rufus, from Tiberius 2 through early 4 (A.D. 14) correctly dated from his co-regency, and the following three coins were done by Gratus.

Valerius Gratus (A.D. 15–25)

obv. wreath with an X for ten rev. palm branch

Identifying Characteristic: Boring

Late Tiberius 4 or A.D. 15

Tiberius and Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 645)

Tiberius wreath and X

Julia/Livia palm branch

used with permission WildWinds.com - ex CNG Coins

Tiberius 5 or A.D. 15/16

Tiberius and Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 646)

Tiberius Wreath and X

Julia/Livia palm branch

used with permission WildWinds.com - ex CNG Coins

Tiberius Years 6-10 No *Prutah* Listed in Hendin

Tiberius 11 or A.D. 21/22
Tiberius and Julia/Livia *prutah* (Hendin 647)

Tiberius
Wreath
and X

Julia/Livia
palm branch

used with permission WildWinds.com - ex CNG Coins

Tiberius Years 12-15 No *Prutah* Listed in Hendin

Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-36)
one side: Instruments of Roman cult worship
other side: wreath or wheat
Identifying Characteristic: Augury
(Roman Cult Worship)

Tiberius 16 or A.D. 26/27
Julia/Livia and Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 648)

Julia/Livia
and barley

Tiberius
simpulum

used with permission WildWinds.com

Also in Tiberius 16 or A.D. 26/27
Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 649a)

Tiberius lituus

wreath

used with permission WildWinds.com

Tiberius 17 or A.D. 27/28
Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 649)
No Julia/Livia *Prutah* Minted!

Tiberius lituus

wreath

used with permission WildWinds.com

Tiberius 18 or A.D. 28/29
Tiberius *prutah* (Hendin 650)
No Julia/Livia *Prutah* Minted!

Tiberius lituus

wreath

used with permission OldSoldierCurrency – Mark Bracken

Correcting the record that Tiberius 16 should be counted from the inception of the co-regency, there is no problem with the coins being available to be placed on the eyes of Christ at His burial on April 28 of A.D. 28. If as some suggest, Pilate began the minting of coins in his territory in March,[67] the coins from A.D. 28 might not have yet been in circulation. In that case, the coins from Tiberius 16 A.D. 26/27 would have been the most recently available for Christ's burial.

Thus far, consideration has been given to evidence establishing the dating of Tiberius' reign reflected on *prutot* through: titles, countermarks on coins, the parallel co-regency of Vespasian and Titus, how the coins minted in Antioch with double dating are dated using a different system, and inscriptions and artwork on the *prutot* themselves. None of these factors threatens the dating within this text, rather they support it. There are two other logical proofs supporting the position of this text regarding the dating of the *prutot* over the eyes of Christ. They are by far the strongest of the proofs: Tiberius' hatred for his mother and Pilate's hatred for the Jews.

***

Tiberius' Hatred for His Mother

Because Tiberius strongly disliked his mother, he did not permit her to receive special honors after her death or even for some time before that point. This fact refutes the dating of the *joulia prutah* of Tiberius 16 being minted as late as A.D.29/30 as held by most contemporary numismatists.

As discussed in this volume, the Shroud of Turin appears to have the image of *prutot* burned into the cloth over the eyes of Christ. These coins provide chronological information as they were minted in Tiberius 16. The best proof the dating of these Roman coins should be counted from the co-regency is in one of these coins. The coin over Christ's right eye at burial was a *prutah* minted in either Tiberius 16, 17 or 18. The coin over the left eye, was a *prutah* of a different variety. The coin(s) over the left eye appear(s) to be the *joulia prutah*.[68] The *joulia prutah* provides the information defining the most precise dating for the Shroud as will be discussed.

Most contemporary numismatists hold the *joulia prutah* was minted for only one year in A.D. 29-30 as a commemorative issue honoring Julia/Livia Augusta, Tiberius' mother, after her death. There does seem to be at least one *joulia prutah* over Christ's left eye. Yet it most certainly was not minted as a commemorative coin after her death on September 28 of A.D. 29.

Charles D. Davis, writer of theos-sphragis.com asserts in his post "Coins of Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate" that Tiberius blocked Julia/Livia from being honored on coinage after her death.[69] This conclusion is logical as it is strongly implied by Tacitus 5, 2. It is absurd to think Tiberius would have permitted such a commemorative coin after her death. Tiberius did not like his mother.[70] The following proofs of his dislike to the point of hatred for his mother are provided by Suetonius:

He avoided frequent meetings or long private talks with her…A senatorial decree adding 'son of Livia' as well as 'son of Augustus' to his honorifics so deeply offended him that he vetoed proposals to confer "Mother of the Country" or any similarly high-sounding title on her. What is more, he often warned Livia to remember that she was a woman and must not interfere in affairs of state…Afterwards Tiberius quarreled openly with his mother. The story goes that she repeatedly urged him to enroll in the jurors' list the name of a man who had been granted a citizenship. Tiberius agreed to do so on one condition – that the entry should be marked 'forced upon the Emperor by his mother'. Livia lost her temper and produced from a strong-box some of Augustus' old letters to her commenting on Tiberius' sour and stubborn character. Annoyance with her for hoarding these documents so long, and then spitefully confronting him with them, is said to have been his main reason for retirement to Capri. At all events he visited her exactly once in the last three years of her life, and only for an hour or two at that; and when she presently fell sick, made no effort to repeat the visit. Livia then died and he spoke of attending her funeral, but did not come. After several days her corpse grew so corrupt and noisome that he sent to have it buried; but vetoed her deification on the pretext that she had herself forbidden this. He also annulled her will, and began taking his revenge on all her friends and confidants – even those whom, as she died, she had appointed to take charge of her funeral rites – and went so far as to condemn one of them, a knight, to the treadmill.[71]

Soon Tiberius broke out in every sort of cruelty and never lacked for victims: these were, first,

his mother's friends and less intimate acquaintances.[72]

Consider Suetonius' meaning when he records that after Tiberius' offense regarding Julia/Livia receiving a title, "he vetoed proposals to confer 'Mother of the Country' or any similarly high-sounding title on her." Among the best and most permanent ways to confer an honor on someone in the empire was having their name and titles on coinage. Julia/Livia's offense and the ensuing fights make it inconceivable Tiberius would have allowed her to be honored on a coin after these events.

Please note, Julia/Livia was honored on the *joulia prutah* coin of Tiberius 16 (Hendin 648) minted under Pontius Pilate. It had been normal for her to be celebrated on *prutot* during Tiberius' rule until Tiberius 17. The next year the *prutah* changed in style, but most importantly the Tiberius 17 and Tiberius 18 *prutot* did not mention Julia/Livia (Hendin 649 and 650). Her name was gone. If Tiberius 17 represents A.D. 29/30 her name's disappearance could have been due to her demise, but that would mean she received special honor after her confrontation with Tiberius of A.D. 26/27 and his command forbidding such a thing. It also means Pilate waited years to mint *prutot* after he began his governance, which would contradict custom and his personality. Therefore, the dating of Tiberius 17 as A.D. 29/30 is illogical and arguably historically impossible.

Considering the facts, it is entirely believable Julia/Livia's removal was due to Tiberius' instructions to deny her special honors. It is a logical conclusion the *joulia prutah* minted in Tiberius 16, was not minted after her death, which occurred on September 28 of A.D. 29 at the age of 86. Julia/Livia had been ill for months before her demise. Additionally, Tiberius was furious with her for at least several more months before her illness. Suetonius mentions a three-year period of their conflict. If, as is logical, Tiberius 16 is A.D. 26/27, with the coin minted in

March, this reflects a two-and-a-half-year period before her death. Suetonius' suggestion of a fight lasting up to three years preceding her death fits nicely with such timing. Therefore, the heated exchange between Tiberius and Julia/Livia can be dated as occurring after, or near the time, the *joulia prutah* coin was minted in Tiberius 16. Please consider the following timeline for the *prutot* that matches Suetonius' history:

> Julia/Livia is honored on the Pilate's *prutah* coin (minted in the year beginning September A.D. 26 in accordance with the Macedonian calendar of the Syrian region)
>
> Julia/Livia and Tiberius have their heated argument and Tiberius forbids her public honors (after the coin of Tiberius 16 had been minted by Pontius Pilate – Hendin 648)
>
> Julia/Livia falls into poor health, without a visit from Tiberius
>
> Julia/Livia dies September 28 of A.D. 29

This timeline matches the history and makes sense. Again, believing Julia/Livia was honored in A.D. 29/30 after her death defies logic and history.

Perhaps the greatest affront to Julia/Livia by Tiberius was done indirectly on coins. Shortly after his reign began as supreme leader in A.D. 14, Tiberius produced several interesting coins pertinent to this study. A coin identified by the British Catalogue of Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC) 24 shows Tiberius' head and title on one side with the head of the recently deceased Augustus on the other. Coins RIC 25 and RIC 26 minted at or near the same time show Tiberius on one side and an image of Pax the goddess of peace and Tiberius' title of "Pontifex Maximus" on the other. Why not have his fellow ruler Julia/Livia on the other side? Why does Tiberius choose to have a title

that designates there can only be one ultimate ruler featured on the coin? These suggest Tiberius was depriving Julia/Livia of glory.

Tiberius seems to again diminish and even insult Julia/Livia on a later series of coins. In A.D. 22/23 two coins are produced honoring Tiberius' reign. RIC 48 features Tiberius' regnal name/title along with the celebration of his 24th year of *tribunician* powers surrounding the letters S.C. signifying Senatorial concurrence. The other side of the coin displays an image of Tiberius. The sister coin, RIC 47 has the same features on the one side reflecting Senatorial concurrence, yet the other side features the goddess Salus and the word "*augusta*" instead of any recognition of Julia/Livia. Some see Salus as representing Julia/Livia. Rather, Salus is replacing Julia/Livia. Salus is the goddess of health.[73]

In both cases these coins exclude Julia/Livia. Perhaps more pertinent, notice the image replacing Julia/Livia in the later coin has become Salus, instead of an image of either the goddesses of peace or justice as were common on Tiberius era coins. Salus' image was not simply an innocuous replacement for an image of Julia/Livia. Julia/Livia was still alive to appreciate a gesture or perceive an insult with the minting of the coins. Tiberius did not merely neglect to honor his mother, he replaced her with a specific goddess communicating a specific message.

Again, Salus was the goddess who personified health.[74] Mattingly notes on Roman coins, Salus - "feeding her snake, is usually related either to the Emperor or to the State; she suggests particularly the deliverance of the Emperor from serious illness or danger or of the State from disaster."[75] The addition of the title "*augusta*" can be understood to mean a generalization of the concept of health.[76] Perhaps, "*augusta,*" whose root word relates to worship of deities, along with Salus suggests a prayer to the goddess that the emperor be protected from serious

illness. It is also interesting to note, ancient historians record Julia/Livia was suspected of the assassinations of Caius and Lucius, in order to assure Tiberius' ascension to the throne, as both these heirs died of unexplained illness within a short period of time.[77]

Perhaps Tiberius was not just insulting his mother by her absence on the coin. It could have been inferred he or the state needed Salus to protect them. By replacing Julia/Livia with Salus, was Tiberius suggesting Julia/Livia was the danger? Was he alluding to a concern of a fear of poisoning, reflected by the goddess who charmed snakes? Poison was a common tool for assassination. Maybe he was trying to tell those who could see it what he thought of his mother. Perhaps he was reminding those with awareness of the accusations related to her gaining power through poison and suggesting she wanted more than her 1/3 share.

Although no existent record implies Tiberius said such things publicly, nevertheless, such an inference on a coin would have suited his character well. He was a man who liked to be indirect in communication, as Augustus ridiculed him, saying Tiberius had, "a habit of introducing obsolete and difficult phrases into his speeches."[78] If this writer sees the possible interpretation 2000 years later, wouldn't at least those who knew of their conflict at the time have seen the insult?

The *joulia prutah* coin was not and could not have been minted as some suggest in A.D. 29-30 after Julia/Livia's death. Nor would it have been minted during the last two years prior to her death due to her conflict with Tiberius. Yet it was minted in the same year as other coins recognized as dated, Tiberius 16. If Tiberius 16 was three years earlier in A.D. 26-27, as Hill's instructions regarding regnal dating within the Province of Syria might suggest, or in A.D. 27 if based upon dating in the city of Rome, it would have been possible to see a coin honor the empress in that year, but no later. Instead of the dating of the coins

on the Shroud of Turin conflicting with the dating of this work, if these coins were minted in A.D. 26/27, they support its positions. The second reason to believe the *prutot* were minted in A.D. 26/27 was Pontius Pilate himself.

***

Pilate's Hatred for the Jews

Pontius Pilate showed his hatred for the Jews as soon as he took power in the most egregious ways possible. As mentioned earlier, as soon as Pilate became Prefect of Judea, he immediately moved the troops under his command from Caesarea to Jerusalem. He arrived at night so when morning came the Jews discovered the banners of the Roman soldiers, **with ornaments**, were on prominent display in Jerusalem.[79] This action was a break from what previous Roman officials had done in Jerusalem.[80] The banners were not a problem. They were cloth and color. The ornaments were busts of the Caesars. These busts were images the Jews regarded as idolatry.[81]

Some suggest Pilate's action was ignorant indiscretion. They argue, surely Pilate did not know the ornaments would incite Jewish anger and bring turmoil. Why would anyone look back at figures of history and assume they are less intelligent and deliberate than people are today? If Pilate had not been deliberate in his action, does one really believe an officer would not have taken Pilate aside and told him that to keep the peace no other prefect had ever allowed the ornaments to be on the banners? Such a failure by Pilate's officers could have been considered more than a dereliction of duty. To allow their new commander to walk into a major mistake that could result in revolt and potentially cost all their lives would likely have ended a soldier's career.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful Pilate needed to be informed

what the protocol had been. Pilate most likely had strategized this move and anticipated the Jewish reaction to it. Based upon when Pilate became prefect, Jew hating Sejanus, Tiberius' right hand, must have selected Pilate for this command.[82] Sejanus wanted the Jews exterminated. Philo records Sejanus' anti-Semitism in two of his works.[83] Eusebius quotes Philo echoing Sejanus' diabolical intentions toward the Jews as he quotes one of Philo's statements:

> … Sejanus, who was then in great favor with Tiberius, had made every effort to destroy the whole nation of the Jews from the foundation, and that in Pontius Pilate under whom the crimes were committed against our Savior, having attempted everything contrary to what was lawful among the Jews respecting the Temple at Jerusalem, which was then yet standing, excited them to the greatest tumults.[84]

As Sejanus picked Pontius Pilate to rule Judea, he must have had great confidence Pilate would inflict grief to the Jews. Pilate's action with the ornaments and other matters were either instructed by Sejanus or were done with the knowledge it would please him since they were in accord with his policies toward the Jews.[85]

The *prutot* of Tiberius 16 were an attempt at the same goal. They were intended to put a barb in the heart of the Jews while Pilate provided pleasure to himself and his boss. The *prutot* Pilate produced during his reign in Judea had one of two symbols on them. They either had a *lituus* that was an auger's staff, which could be construed as a magic wand, or they had a *simpulum,* a ladle used to pour a sacrifice on the altar of a Roman cult figure. No Roman prefect before or after Pontius Pilate used these symbols of Roman cult worship on their *prutah* coins.[86] Due to the information already presented, it is convincing Tiberius 16 was counted from the co-regency. Thus, Tiberius 16 would have been the first year Pilate would have had a hand in

minting coinage. Such minting would have been at the earliest September A.D. 26 through the end of A.D. 27 at the latest. New and zealous in command, it is easy to imagine Pilate would have relished the opportunity to show hostility to the Jews and earn points with his boss.

In Pilate's first year he minted two varieties of *prutot*. One had a *lituus* and honored Tiberius Caesar. The other had a *simpulum* and honored Empress Julia/Livia. It seems Pilate was using his first minting of coins as an opportunity to cover political bases back in Rome as well as forcing the hated Jews to handle coins every day that represented idolatry. Just to make the picture complete, remember the *prutah* was referred to in Scripture as the "widow's mite." It was an acceptable coin for use in temple offerings. While some suggest the presence on Pilate's *prutot* of images of pagan worship was an unintentional error on the prefect's part, it is more logical to believe Pilate had devised a way to get objects celebrating idolatry carried into the Jewish Temple.[87] Pilate's actions were an affront to the Jews, God's Temple, and God's law (Deuteronomy 18:9-14) that, as Philo states, were done quite intentionally.

Before one suggests Pilate did not understand what the *lituus* or the *simpulum* were or their significance, be informed before he was a Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate was an auger.[88] He used these items in religious rituals as part of his job. Pilate knew exactly what he was doing. If he were not intelligent and able to understand psychology and ways to ingratiate himself to his bosses, he would not have been elevated to prefect.

This analysis of Pilate's actions with the *prutot* reinforces the points made earlier. All these reasons make the case the coins of Tiberius 16 were minted A.D. 26/27. Therefore, the dating of Christ's Crucifixion on April 28 of AD 28 is supported by the coin images burned into the Shroud of Turin.

*****

Crazy Clocks and Calendars

When Does a Day Begin?

What Is a Week and When Does It Begin?

What Is a Month and When Does It Begin?

What Is a Year and When Does it Begin?

How Were Days or Months Given Their Names?

History of the Names of the Months Used by the Jews

When Does the Year Begin?

Who Used Which Calendar?

What Are "Regnal Years and Accession Years?"

Converting Julian and Gregorian Calendar Dates to Jewish Calendar Dates and Days of the Week

***

When Does a Day Begin?

One of the challenges to understanding the gospel narratives and the history of the period is how time was tracked. Few have experienced a point in life where the day did not begin at 12 midnight. On New Year's Eve on television, a person can watch the new day and year celebrated in one time zone after another. There is no debate about the start of the day or the date. Such uniformity was not the case in the first century. Pliny the Elder, who served as a Roman magistrate and famously wrote numerous letters that serve as valuable historical records, wrote the following:

> The Babylonians reckoned from one sunrise to the next; the Athenians from one sunset to the next; the Umbrians from noon to noon; (the) multitude (of common people), universally, from light to darkness; the Roman priests and those who preside over the civil day, and also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, from midnight to midnight.[1]

Although it does not affect this study, correct reporting demands the inclusion of a correction of Pliny's statement regarding Babylonian timekeeping offered by chronologists Parker and Dubberstein. They state, "…in actual practice the Babylonian day began in each case with the preceding sunset."[2] Neither Parker and Dubberstein, nor any other scholar this writer is aware of had other objections to Pliny's statement. It should be noted that Humphreys specifies the Egyptians from 2900 B.C. to the time of Christ had both a civil calendar and a religious calendar. While Pliny is unchallenged that the Egyptian calendar marked general dating from midnight, it is also true the Egyptian **religious** calendar marked days as beginning at sunrise.[3]

One would hope at least within a country there was consistency as to when the day began. Consistency was absolutely not the case in Israel! Membership in a religious sect often determined when a person regarded the day to begin. An individual might mark the day differently depending upon where he was, what subject was being talked about, or with whom he spoke.

To review from chapter 1, the Pharisees marked the day from sunset to sunset, approximately 6 p.m. The Essenes marked the start of the day from midnight, as the Romans and Egyptians did.[4] The Samaritans marked the 24-hour day from dawn to dawn, approximately 6 a.m. Some have suggested, the Sadducees also marked the day as beginning at dawn.[5]

For most Jews it was Pharisaic timing that marked the day for religious purposes, including Sabbaths, feasts, and holidays.[6] This fact is reflected in Mark 1:32 as the people waited until evening after the Sabbath had passed, by Pharisaic timing, to bring their sick to Jesus Christ to be healed:

> And when evening had come, [while the sun was setting per Luke 4:40] after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon possessed.

Pharisaic timing is also reflected in the Passion Week as Joseph of Arimathea hurries to bury Christ before sunset, as dusk began the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This rush is also a confirmation Jesus Christ was dead, off the cross, and buried before sunset.

One can see in the Synoptic Gospels' record of religious feasts the Pharisaic timing of starting the 24-hour day in the evening, as has been shown in chapter 15. Yet those same gospels also used the timing of the common people dividing the day into two halves: daytime and nighttime. The sunrise start to the 12-hour day is used to identify the timing of events of the Crucifixion in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Notice the following verses. Christ was put on the cross at "the third hour" around 9 a.m. as Mark records:

> *And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. It was the <u>third hour</u> when they crucified Him.* (Mark 15:24-25) (underlining added)

All three Synoptic Gospels record the period of darkness in like manner:

> *When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.* (Mark 15:33 – as supported with similar wording in Matthew 27:45 and Luke 23:44) (underlining added)

This passage again shows the Synoptic Gospels marking the day by common people's time counting of the daylight period using hours 1-12. The darkness, beginning at the sixth hour counting from sunrise, covered the land from noon to 3 p.m. Consider this, if the passage was marking strictly Pharisaic timing counting the day from sunset, then it would be nothing unusual for there to be darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. It would be quite normal for it to be dark from midnight to 3 a.m. It would have been a miracle if it had been light during that period.

The timing of the common people again marks the time of death of Jesus Christ at 3 p.m. in Mark's Gospel.

> *At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" … And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.* (Mark 15:34a & 37) (underlining added)

If it is not hard enough to adjust to varying time marking systems, this wrinkle will make it even more difficult. Like the other Gospels, John recognized Jewish religious holidays as starting at sunset. Yet he used Roman timekeeping, starting the day with a 12-hour period from midnight and then again counting 12-hours from noon, to chart the progress of the day. Here are several examples of John using Roman timekeeping cited by chronologist Jack Finegan and theologian Norman Walker as well as other scholars:

John 1:35-39

> *Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus*

as He walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'

The two disciples heard him [John the Baptist] *speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?'*

He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

One can take the tenth hour as either 10 a.m. Roman time, or 4 p.m. common-people's time. The fact the two disciples stayed with Him "that day" would suggest Roman timing. For those curious, it could not have been 10 p.m. as the Greek word used in John 1:39 is *hēmeran* that refers to the day light period from dawn to dusk.[7]

John 4:5-7

So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

The sixth hour could be 6 p.m. Roman time, or 12 noon common people's time. This is debatable, but it does not make sense that Jesus Christ, who was accustomed to walking many miles in a day would be wearied by noon. It would also be very unusual

and uncomfortable for the woman to get her water at the hottest point in the day. Many sermons have said she got her water at noon to avoid contact with the other women of the city. If that were true, she could have gotten water just ahead of, or after, the crowd arriving around 6 p.m. and avoided the heat of the day. This strategy to get the water just after the other people seems to be the likely choice of the woman.

John 4:46-52

Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

*So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and started off.**

As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

* SGW #4198, "ἐπορεύετο", pronounced "eporeueto." This word means "to go." The man left Jesus' presence and was in effect departing on the trip, it does not necessarily

mean he completed the trip without stopping for the night along the way.

The seventh hour by Roman time would have been 7 p.m.

For the sake of argument consider the other possibility. By common people's time it would have been 1 p.m. The trip from Cana to Capernaum is 20 miles. A 20-mile trip takes 4.5 to 7 hours walking fast or by donkey. If the miracle happened at 1 p.m., it is safe to say the father would have returned home before nightfall to see his son and the miracle. He could certainly have made it home before dark. By the same token, why would his servants, who know their master is most concerned, not leave immediately to tell their master the good news? If it was 1 p.m. when the boy was healed, they could have made it to Cana before the dangers of night.

Consider this event by common people's timekeeping and a 1 p.m. healing another way. Assuming, as Scripture seems to say, the father leaves for Capernaum immediately but does not stop for the night. If John's Gospel was written in common people's time and both the official leaves Cana and his servants leave Capernaum immediately, they would have met in the middle around 4 p.m. If that were the case, they would not say it was "yesterday" when the healing took place.

Now, examine the same story using the Roman system. If the child were healed at 7 p.m., due to the dangers of travel, it is very likely both the father and the servants would have started, or at least completed, their journey the next morning. They would likely have met in the middle of their journey sometime in the morning and they would have referred to the time of the healing as "yesterday."

This story is another proof that John's Gospel was written in Roman timekeeping, starting the 12-hour count from noon.[8]

John's Gospel includes a fourth proof he used Roman timekeeping that appears to be irrefutable.

John 19:14

> *Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he (Pontius Pilate) said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"*

How could Pilate make this statement at the end of the trial of Jesus Christ just before he condemns Him to Crucifixion at the sixth hour while Mark's Gospel says the Crucifixion began at the third hour? John was using the Roman system. Marking time from midnight would mean the trial ended at about 6 a.m., giving plenty of time for Christ to be on the cross by the third hour, 9 a.m. based upon the common people's timekeeping used by Mark in his Gospel.

To make the point another way, Roman law forbade the trial of a Jew to extend beyond 9 a.m. on a day when a Sabbath began in the evening. If John's Gospel was not recorded in Roman time, then Pilate violated a law establish by Caesar Augustus.[9] There is no way Pilate would have committed this offense.

Brooke Foss Westcott teaches that John used the Roman time system in his Gospel. He is noted for promoting this knowledge in "The Speaker's Commentary" edited by F. C. Cook. Wescott later advanced this position in his own book, "Gospel According to St. John," published in 1882

and 1896.[10] Subsequently, John's use of Roman timekeeping was embraced by numerous other scholars.[11] The position that the Gospel of John used Roman, or what some have called "Asiatic timing," is also supported by Edersheim.[12]

J. A. T. Robinson proposed why John's Gospel used Roman timekeeping. He says John makes a distinction between the Jews of Judea from those of Galilee and the Diaspora. Robinson asserts John's Gospel was written as an evangelistic tool to reach out to the Greek-speaking Jews. Many of the Jews of Galilee and those of the Diaspora who spoke Greek would have been influenced by Greco-Roman culture. They would naturally have deferred to using Roman timing, which is why J. A. T. Robinson asserts John used Roman timekeeping.[13]

An interesting but less likely theory for John's decision to use Roman timekeeping is presented by Norman Walker. He presents a fascinating possibility supported by documentation going back to the fourth century. John the Beloved, being approximately 90 years of age, dictated the Gospel bearing his name to Marcion, who later became a heretic. Marcion was a ship-owner who worked daily with the Greeks and Romans and those doing commerce in that culture. Walker says it is logical, with his background and being John's secretary, Marcion could have influenced John's decision to use Roman timekeeping.[14] It seems, both factors could have influenced John the Beloved's thinking.

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What Is a Week and When Does It Begin?

Genesis records God's creation of the heavens and earth in six days followed by His rest on the 7th day establishing the seven-day week (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and Exodus 31:15-17). This system has been Mankind's long-standing

protocol. The French instituted a 10-day week that allowed people to rest on the 10th day.[15] This system was forced on the people as leadership was attempting to rid them of their holy days as part of the French Revolution. For several reasons the system failed and was abandoned after about 12 years.

Those who have been employed to work Monday through Friday, having Saturday and Sunday off, may consider Monday to be the first day of the week. In reality, and as most calendars reflect, Sunday is the first day of the week and Saturday, the seventh day, is the weekly Sabbath day established in the Old Testament as sanctified by God. Most Christian denominations have worship services on Sunday, "the Lord's Day", as that was the day Jesus Christ was discovered to be risen from the dead and no longer in the tomb. Having one day off a week is certainly a benefit both for the spiritual but also the physical well-being of mankind.

A second use of the word Sabbath has been several God ordained Sabbath days throughout the year not tied to a day of the week but to particular dates. These additional Sabbaths were also to be kept holy without work, giving people well needed breaks from routine. Indeed, Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

The word Sabbath was also used a third way, as it meant a seven-day week. This usage is reflected in Christ's resurrection as that day started the 50-day count down to the Feast of Weeks, called by Christians - Pentecost. "Now early on the first week…," as *JJM* translates John 20:1, was the start of the first week of the countdown to Pentecost that was in seven weeks plus one day.

One final obvious observation, seven-day weeks do not fit neatly into months or years. Thus, a particular day of a month or year is not tied to a particular day of the week from year to year.

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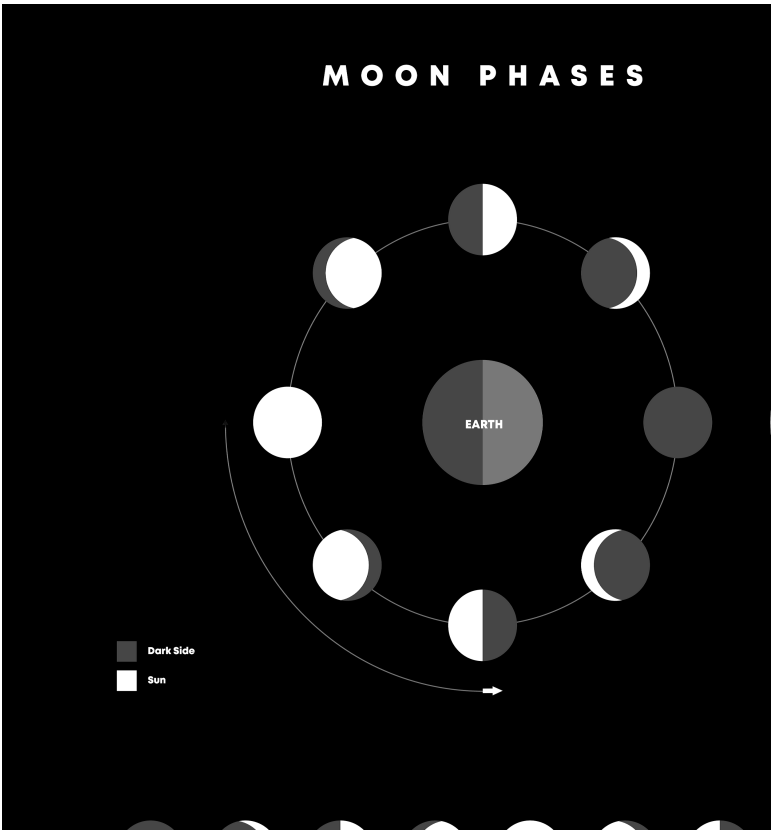
What Is a Month and When Does It Begin?

Hodesh, the Hebrew term for 'new moon', came by extension to mean the period from one 'new moon' to the next, hence, to mean a 'month.'[16]

Lunar calendars have months based on the cycle of the moon. The lunar cycle has several phases: New Moon (fully dark), Waxing (growing) Crescent, First Quarter, Waxing Gibbon, Full Moon (fully lit), Waning (shrinking) Gibbon, Third Quarter, and Waning Crescent. There is a 'dark moon' when the moon is between the sun and the earth since the side facing earth has no illumination from the sun. Yet the New Moon, more specifically, is not just when it is fully dark but officially when there is a conjunction (alignment) of the sun, moon, and earth in that order. A conjunction happens at the middle of a 'dark moon' and is when, officially, a 'new moon' is created. The average time between the start of the dark moon and the conjunction is 30 hours (varying from seventeen to forty-two hours).[17] This conjunction is rarely a perfect alignment since the moon's orbit around the earth is not in perfect alignment with the earth's orbit around the sun. Also, the moon's orbit around the earth is elliptical and so is not perfectly circular. These variations lead to the dark moon ranging from 1 ½ days to 3 ½ days in length with the "official" new moon occurring at the midpoint of the dark moon.[18]



The Egyptians considered the conception of the new moon as occurring on the day of conjunction. The Egyptians, at least per their religious calendar, had a sunrise-to-sunrise day.[19] They counted the first day of the new month as starting the morning the moon's crescent was no longer visible in the eastern sky. The moon was fully dark, perhaps already for close to 24-hours.[20] Moses would have been schooled to do the same as he received his training in the house of Pharaoh and was "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Exodus 2:10 and Acts 7:22).

God told Moses to count the month the Israelites departed from their captivity in Egypt as their first month of the year (Exodus 12:1-2 and 13:4). This first month is in the

spring season. Some say the use of spring to start their year began at a later point. Nevertheless, Scripture says the Israelites used the spring month of Abib as the start of their calendar from the Exodus. The Jewish religious calendar still uses a lunar calendar beginning in the spring.

God did not tell Moses to change anything else with the timing of the Jewish year. Neither the length of months nor the start of the day was changed, based upon the Scriptural account. It is reasonable, and there is evidence, the Jews initially kept the same start of each month at the start of the dark moon at sunrise and the start of each day at sunrise as used in Egypt. This Jewish calendar is called the **Pre-exilic** Jewish Calendar. Humphreys' work on this subject contained in his work, *Mystery of the Last Supper*, is compelling. In brief, the Jews used the Egyptian calendar during their 430 years of captivity in Egypt and then at God's command established a new calendar with a different start month - but was otherwise similar to the Egyptian lunar religious calendar.

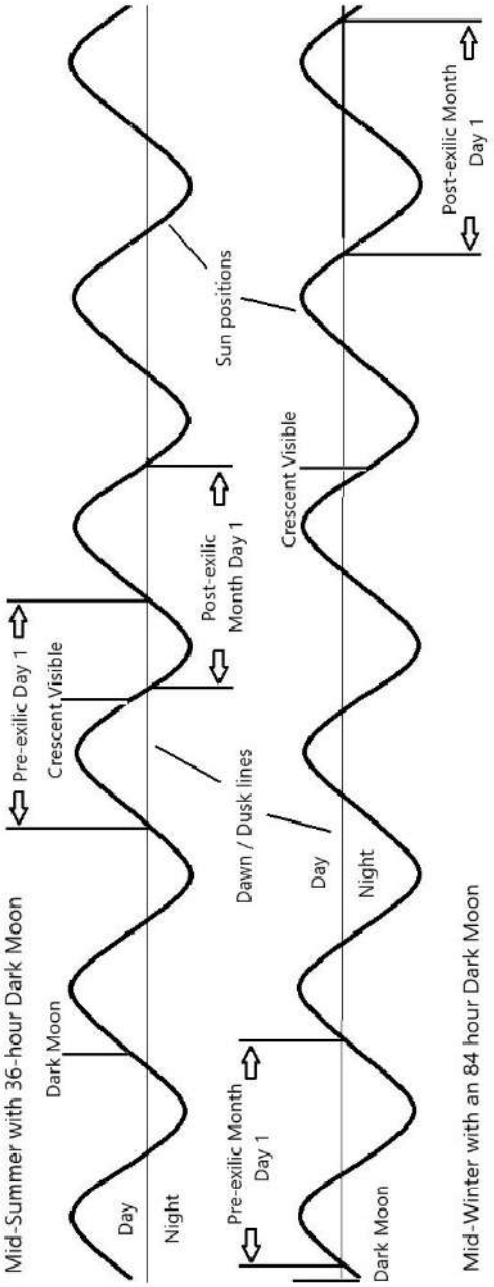
The Samaritans today use a similar system identifying the start of the month based on the conjunction of the moon. Their practice resembles the approach used for the ancient Egyptian lunar religious calendar. However the modern Samaritan calendar uses a calculated conjunction for the 'new moon' at mid 'dark moon' rather than simply the **disappearance** of the moon.[21] In the first century, the Samaritans did not mark the beginning of the month as the Jews did. The Samaritans used the Pre-exilic Jewish calendar they were taught after the Assyrians placed them in the land occupied by the Jews of the northern kingdom, Israel.

After that, in 586 B.C. the Jews of the southern kingdom, Judah, were carried away to captivity in Babylon where they came under the influence of Babylonian culture for over 50 years. This influence resulted in the development of the **Post-exilic** Jewish calendar.[22]

As the Egyptians used the moon for their religious calendar, which the Israelites adopted, likewise their new masters, the Babylonians, also used a lunar calendar. However, the Babylonians had a different starting point for the month. The Babylonians consider the **appearance** of the new moon in the western evening sky as the birth of the new moon and started the month with it. The Babylonians had a sunset-to-sunset day and the first day of their month started that evening with the new crescent moon.[23]

The Jews adopted the Babylonian starting point during their captivity in that empire and have carried it forward to today. Therefore, they begin their new month in the evening 1 or more days after the old moon had passed. The difference between the disappearance of the old moon and the sighting of the new moon is on average roughly 60 hours.[24] The difference between when the months would have begun between the Egyptian (Pre-exilic Jewish) calendar and the Babylonian (Post-exilic Jewish) calendar would have normally been 1 day, and on occasion 2 or more days.[25]

Due to the variation in the length of the 'dark moon', the first of the month of the Post-exilic Jewish Calendar can vary from the evening of the first of the month of the Pre-exilic Jewish Calendar to as late as the evening of the fourth day of the Pre-exilic Jewish Calendar. See the following drawing where day 1 of the Pre-exilic Jewish calendar month and the Post-exilic Jewish calendar month extremes are compared.



Extremes of Pre-exilic and Post-exilic Day 1 Relationship

There are three instances where Scripture lists the day the Passover was to be celebrated that do not seem to be the same as the original instructions in Exodus 12: Leviticus 23:6, Numbers 28:17, and Ezekiel 45:21. It appears, two of these passages simply adjust the instructions to tailor them to the Babylonian calendar. In the third one, the prophet Ezekiel was not pleased or satisfied as can be seen by his stark statement condemning the adjustment by the Jews to the Babylonian calendar. As he pointed out, the Jews had 'conformed to the standards of the nations around [them]' (Ezekiel 11:12). While using their Babylonian calendar, Ezekiel addressed the corruption in the Jews timing.

Ezekiel was trying to move the Passover back to its original day. He did so by directing the Jews to celebrate Passover 24-hours earlier, on 14 *Nisan*, so the meal would usually be on the originally specified day, even though it would then, by their current perspective, appear the lamb was killed early, on 13 *Nisan*. The killing of the lamb would thus have usually matched God's instructions for it to be killed on Abib 14 (Pre-exilic sunrise-to-sunrise Calendar) with the meal eaten also on Abib 14 per the original command.[26]

One can see this timing explains how the Samaritans generally celebrated Passover a day earlier than the Jews. In the year of the Crucifixion, the Pre-exilic calendar used by the Samaritans was one day ahead of the Post-exilic Jewish calendar. This information can be proven by using the information in this appendix and cross-referencing the new moon charts on the “Spring Phenomena 25 BCE to 38 CE” on the webpage of the United States Naval Observatory.[27]

The Pre-exilic calendar explains two things. First, it explains why Jesus would have obtained a lamb for the Last Supper on 9 *Nisan*, or sooner, instead of 10 *Nisan* as done by the majority of the Jews. Second, it means Jesus

was not early with His Passover (Last Supper) with the disciples. He was right on time per Exodus 12.

The majority, if not all the Essenes, lived their lives by a different ancient 364-day calendar based upon the sun.[28] There are four texts in the Dead Sea scrolls referring to an ancient lunar calendar some within the Essene sect may have used at least for religious purposes.[29] However, most, if not all, the Essenes used a solar calendar and timing in their daily lives. This group always had Passover on a Tuesday they considered to be 14 *Nisan*, which only infrequently matched that date on the calendar used by the majority of the Jews.[30] It does not appear the Essenes' Tuesday Passover matched the same week the other sects celebrated Passover in the year Christ was crucified.[31]

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What Is a Year and When Does it Begin?

In addition to the challenges of marking the day and the month, the keeping of time in a yearly calendar also presented challenges and different conclusions in early societies. Mankind needed points of reference beyond the Earth to measure their lives. Four things provided such a reference for charting a year.

One of these points of reference used to mark a year was the cyclic change of the night sky. The year was broken into twelve months. Stars were visualized into constellations. A different constellation was then identified with each of the twelve months.[32]

A second point of reference used for marking the year was Sirius also called Sothis. It is the second brightest star in the sky, second only the sun. When visible, it is the first star appearing each night. Sirius was an excellent choice. The ancient Egyptians used it for their fixed (365 day) "Sothic" year as initially determined by Sirius' heliacal

rising. A heliacal rising is the first appearing of a star over the horizon after its seasonal absence. Its heliacal rising is actually almost precisely 365 1/4 days which the Julian year is based upon.

The difference between the solar (tropical) year (from one equinox or solstice to the next same equinox or solstice) in A.D. 2020 was only 13.1326704 minutes longer than a year marked by Sirius. Every 1,000 years that difference increases by only 0.92592 minutes.[33] This variation leads to a third point of reference used to mark a year. It is the sun as it varies north and south in the sky seasonally due to the Earth's inclination toward the sun. Using the sun, however, presented certain problems. The actual time of a solar year is 365.24219879 days. The length of the year is getting longer as the number of seconds needed to get to the starting angle of measurement continues to lengthen as the Earth is very slowly moving away from the sun. For those interested, a sidereal year for the earth is when the earth returns to the same place in its orbit around the sun and is approximately 20 minutes 24.5 seconds longer than the solar year since the earth wobbles a little on its axis of rotation.

If one uses the sun to mark the year, then they naturally use the day and the week as subsets of measurement; 52 weeks gets close. It is only off by roughly 1 1/4 days each year. The whole additional day is no problem. The year simply includes more than exactly 52 weeks. The 1/4 day requires some form of intercalation. Most of humanity solves this problem now by adding a day once every four years, except for years divisible by 100 and not divisible by 400. Other cultures inserted days using other methods.

The fourth point of reference used for marking a year is the moon. The moon presents a regular cycle that is very visible, and its cycle equals almost a month, or roughly 29 1/2 days. This method is very functional and visible, but since it does not match a solar year, it requires

adjustments of additional days or months to match the solar year.

The Jewish calendars are based upon the moon. The Jews follow a calendar with five to seven months of 30 days each year and five to seven months of 29 days each year. This system leaves them short roughly 11 days each year. To bring their lunar calendars into line with the solar cycle, the Jews, Greeks, Romans (pre-Julius Caesar), and others inserted a full month (embolismic month) to recapture the time once they had fallen back to that degree.[34] During the time of Christ, the Jews normally inserted an extra month every two to three years based on specific rules.[35] Similarly, ancient Babylonians inserted, and Jews of today insert, seven extra months across 19 years on a preset cycle to keep their lunar calendars in line with the sun.[36]

The Hebrew, Babylonian, and Macedonian calendars were consistent with each other. The only difference being in the names of the months and that the Babylonian calendar started the year in the spring, at the same point as the Hebrew Religious calendar, while the Macedonian calendar began in the fall at the same time as the Hebrew Civil calendar. A shift in month names appears to have occurred between the Macedonian calendar and the Babylonian and Jewish calendars between A.D. 31 and A.D. 46 or 47.[37] Fortunately for us, since it was after A.D. 31, this shift in month names did not happen between the years of Christ's conception and Resurrection. Therefore, the names that were equivalent month by month between Jewish and Macedonian calendars did not change in the period being studied – except for considerations of the dedication of the first Temple. The earlier monthly name alignment during the building of the Temple is mentioned in that section of this book.

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How Were Days or Months Given Their Names?

Sometimes calendars use the names of people for months. July is named for Julius Caesar. August is named for Augustus Caesar. Sometimes calendars use the names of gods for the names of days or months. For example, Saturday is named for the Roman god Saturnus. In ancient Israel, months were sometimes named after agricultural events like the month *Abib*, which means "fresh ear" referring to barley.[38]

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History of the Names of the Months Used by the Jews

Israel's founding fathers identified the months by the same names as the Canaanites who lived on the land before them, and shared with Abraham and his family the system of beginning the year in the fall.[39] The early Egyptians divided the year into three seasons based upon the Nile river's annual flooding cycle.[40] During each season the months were numbered in succession, as noted on a stela of Thutmose III that states, "Second month of the second season, tenth day."[41] At some point the Egyptians adopted names for each of the 12 months.[42] During the more than 400 years of captivity in Egypt the Jews adopted Egyptian dating, as discussed earlier.

Although no Egyptian month names are included in Scripture, four ancient Canaanite names used by the Jews can be found in the Old Testament, as presented here:

Canaanite Month	Canaanite name used by the Jews	Jewish Month of Religious Spring Calendar	Mentioned in Old Testament
7	*Abib*	1	Ex. 12:2 and Deut. 16:1
8	*Ziv*	2	I Kings 6:1
1	*Ethanim*	7	I Kings 8:2
2	*Bul*	8	I Kings 6:38 [43]

Whether the Israelites ever used Egyptian month names or just their Egyptian numbers, they eventually changed their custom to referring to the months by Hebrew versions of Babylonian names alone or using those names along with numbers. Then, for a time they appear to use only a number to identify the months. Finally, the Jews settled on the use of only the Hebrew version of the Babylonian names. These transitions can be seen taking place in the books of the Old Testament. How the months were identified provides input as to the dating of some of these books.

The book of Esther shows the Post-exilic use of both month numbers and the Hebrew version of Babylonian names used together in Esther 2:16, 3:7, and 8:9. Zechariah, like Esther, uses both numbers and the Hebrew version of the Babylonian names as can be seen in Zechariah 1:7 and 7:1.[44] Then Ezra and Nehemiah, contemporary books of Zechariah, reflect a change taking place.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah provide an interesting study. Early in these books, they use the Hebrew version of the Babylonian names without numbers. The time period being reflected is when Israel was being restored as a province under the rule of the Persians. This fact is seen in Ezra 6:15 and in Nehemiah 1:1, 2:1, and 6:15. It is interesting the month citation in Ezra 7:8, occurring about 70 years after the time referenced in Ezra 6, uses the

number of the month instead of the Hebrew version of a Babylonian name. The same thing happens in Nehemiah 7:73.

It seems they were avoiding names rooted in an idolatrous culture, due to spiritual revival. Scripture explains in the verses following Nehemiah 7:73 that on the first day of the month all the people gathered together to hear the Book of the Law read.

Ezekiel 8 records a vision God gave to Ezekiel at the beginning of Israel's captivity in Babylon. This vision occurred decades before Esther, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah were written. In the vision, God says Israel earned His punishment by honoring false gods, including Mesopotamia's false god, Tammuz. The Hebrew month name still used today, *Tammuz*, is the Hebrew form of the name of the false Babylonian god "Duzu."[45]

God's law forbids honoring or worshiping false gods. Wouldn't the people of Israel, who were so recently restored after punishment for worshiping false gods, be especially careful and wise to avoid repeating the same mistake after hearing the reading of the Law? Wouldn't they recognize that using these names was an act of honoring the gods to which they referred? Such a realization may be why change occurs within the two books. After the recorded reading of the Book of the Law in Nehemiah and after the instructions "… written in the book of Moses" per Ezra 6:18, references to the month names are eliminated for a time.

By the middle of the first century B.C. and probably much earlier, Israel was back to using the Hebrew version of the Babylonian names, as can be seen in the Apocryphal book II Maccabees 11:30, 33, 38.

The Jews were spared destruction of their cities and culture at the hands of the Greeks by Divine Providence. Many other areas conquered by Alexander the Great, son

of Philip of Macedon, had their month names replaced by the names of months in the Macedonian calendar. After Alexander's death, his general, Seleucid I Nicator, founded the Seleucid Kingdom centered in Syria and reigned from c. 312 B.C. until 281 B.C. He ordered that his kingdom number their calendar from year 1 of his reign using the Macedonian lunar calendar with its names.[46]

Again, the Macedonian calendar began the year in the fall and paralleled the system of the Hebrew civil calendar.

Josephus' writings use both the Hebrew names and the Macedonian names and treat these calendars as functionally interchangeable.[47] On occasion he used Seleucid dating, as well as Olympiad dating as has been mentioned in this text. The use of the Hebrew month names, and likely their Macedonian parallels, and their shared lunar structure were the norm in Israel until approximately the middle of the first century A.D.[48]

During the latter half of the first century, probably from the fall of Jerusalem, a new system took hold in Israel. That system, called the Syro-Macedonian calendar, began the year in the fall (October) and used the Macedonian names. However, the Syro-Macedonian calendar used the 12 Julian solar months to define the year.[49]

When Israel regained its statehood in 1948, it readopted the lunar calendar and system used when the Second Temple was destroyed. It uses the Hebrew form of the Babylonian names and recognizes a religious schedule starting in the spring, with its civil calendar beginning in the fall.

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When Does the Year Begin?

For the earliest calendars the agricultural cycle was used to define the beginning and ending of a year. This practice can be seen in the Egyptian calendars before the reign of Ptolemy IX Euergetes II (145-116 B.C) where the seasons are based upon the Nile River and its effect on agriculture.[50] Later, the four seasons based upon the sun became common to define the beginning of each year. The four seasons were far more definite points than an agricultural cycle affected by the weather.

Again, some cultures began their year in the fall, such as Macedonia, Syria, and Egypt after Ptolemy IX Euergetes II.[51] Some societies used the first new moon after the summer solstice to begin their year, such as the Greek city states of Athens and Delphi.[52] Other cultures used a point during winter to mark the start of their year, as the ancient Romans did.[53] Still, other cultures began their calendar years in the spring, such as the Babylonians, and the Jewish religious calendar.[54]

Finegan suggests Babylonian influence is the reason Israel had a spring religious New Year. He suggests it began after 605 B.C. due to a Babylonian military victory. King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Neco in that year. This shifting of power occurred during the reign of King Jehoiakim of Israel. In the next year, 604/603 B.C., during Jehoiakim's fifth year of reign, it is clear Israel was using spring as the starting point of the year, as reflected in Jeremiah 36:9.[55] Yet Exodus 12:1-2 records it was God's command through Moses that established the spring as the start of the Jewish New Year. Josephus also credits Moses with establishing the spring as the starting point of the Jewish religious New Year when he says:

> This calamity happened in the six hundredth year of Noah's government [Age] in the second month, called by the Macedonians Dios, but by the Hebrews, Marchesuan; for so did they order

> their year in Egypt; but Moses appointed *Nisan*, which is the same with Xanthicus, should be the first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month; so that this month began the year as to all the solemnities they observed to the honor of God...[56]

For the purpose of understanding, note the names of the months in the preceding paragraph. Josephus wrote his book at the end of the first century after there had been a month inserted into the Macedonian calendar. Adjusting back to the month-to-month matching of Macedonian to Jewish calendars before the intercalation month, which occurred sometime between A.D. 31 and A.D. 47, and including the Julian/Gregorian equivalents, provides the following table:[57]

Jewish Religious Month	**Macedonian**	**Hebrew**	**Julian**
1	*Artemisios*	*Nisan*	March/April
2	*Daisios*	*Iyar*	April/May
3	*Panemos*	*Sivan*	May/June
4	*Loos*	*Tammuz*	June/July
5	*Gorpiaios*	*Ab* or *Av*	July/Aug.
6	*Hyperberetaios*	*Elul*	Aug,/Sept.
7	*Dios*	*Tishrei*	Sept./Oct.
8	*Apellaios*	*Heshvan*	Oct./Nov.
9	*Audynaios*	*Kislev*	Nov./Dec.
10	*Peritios*	*Tevet*	Dec./Jan,
11	*Dystros*	*Shevat*	Jan./Feb.
12	*Xanthikos*	*Adar*	Feb./March

This chart reflects the names of the months of calendars used in the area and during time of Christ's ministry.

Israel had been under Greek and then Seleucid domination for hundreds of years before Rome conquered the territory. This fact would have probably been the

cause of the Jews' use of a civil calendar which commenced in the fall beginning with the parallel date 1 *Tishrei*. 1 *Dios* or 1 *Tishrei* began the political new year, being the same day, until sometime after A.D. 31 and before A.D. 47. After that point, and due to an extra (intercalary) month being inserted into the Macedonian calendar, the first day of the month called *Hyperberetaios* began its new year.

Ancient Egypt had three different calendars, a lunar calendar and two solar calendars.[58] The Egyptian solar calendars had the year beginning in the fall. These solar calendars divided the year into three 120-day periods totaling 360 days in a year. At the end of that cycle each year, five epagomenal days were added so that the new year began almost in sync with the Earth's solar year.[59] This 365-day calendar was off by ¼ day each year. The "standard civil calendar with a shifting year" did not include leap years. This error resulted in the Egyptian calendar being off by one full year every 1460 Julian years. This 1461 Egyptian year cycle was referred to as a Sothic cycle.[60]

Fortunately, the conquest by Augustus brought a new calendar in 22 B.C. where the concept of a leap year every fourth year was installed into an Egyptian "standard civil calendar with a fixed year."[61] This Roman influence allowed the Egyptian fixed year calendar to roughly match the Julian calendar as for example the Egyptian seventh month date of *Phamenoth* 25 always matched March 21st.[62]

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Who Used Which Calendar?

As noted in the text of this book, there were several different calendars in use at the time of Christ in Israel. The one used depended upon location, the event being

discussed, and, as in the case of the Essenes, even upon the politics of the people communicating. The early Roman calendar began the year with the month of Martius (March) early in spring and it only had ten months.[63] Two months were added by Numa Pompilius, the second legendary king of Rome (715-672 BC).[64] Starting in 153 B.C., the Roman years became identified by the two consuls who served for the year that began on January 1.[65]

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar reorganized the Roman calendar, which was named "Julian" in his honor. His plan addressed the problem of the partial day with the leap-year system, which after being modified in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, produced the Gregorian calendar system used today.[66] Although the Roman calendar was well established during Julius Caesar's reign, throughout the empire local customs governed which calendar was used.

Egyptian, or Ptolemaic, calendars' first documentation of using a calendar that started in the fall was 117 B.C. From that point the Egyptians matched the Syrian region of the Roman empire with the Macedonian calendar used in that area.[67]

With Roman rule in their Syrian Province from its capital of Antioch, the Julian solar calendar became dominant there during the latter half of the first century. Thus, the Syro-Macedonian calendar with its Julian solar months using Macedonian names became the calendar in use in Israel, certainly after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Yet Jews world-wide faithfully continued to identify their religious dating through lunar Hebrew dating with a spring start to the year, as some suggest, since at least the Babylonian influence of 605 B.C. but much more likely since instituted by Moses.

Regarding Olympiad dating, just as the summer Olympics

are every four years, so the Greek-Olympiad calendar system was based on a four-year cycle. This calendar system counted years based upon the Olympiad number and then a dash and the numbers "1" through "4," depending upon whether it was the first, second, third, or fourth year since the start of that four-year period.

As explained earlier, Josephus sometimes used a four-year Greek-Olympiad dating system alongside other calendar systems. Even though in many areas the Greek-Olympiad calendar began with the summer solstice. When Josephus used this system as a double verification of the date, he used a start to the year appropriate to his country and region. For dating before the intercalation in the middle of the first century, Josephus used 1 *Nisan* in the spring as the beginning of the Olympiad year for religious matters. He used 1 *Tishrei* in the fall as the start of the year for Jewish civil matters, as they and the Syrian region did.[68]

For those interested, while the term A.D. came to mean **Anno Domini**, "in the year of our Lord" it did not begin with that meaning. A monk named Dionysius Exiguus introduced his dating system in A.D. 525. His system went into effect with the start of A.D. 532 as it followed A.D. **Anno Diocletian** 247, the completion of the 247th year since Diocletian's reign that began in A.D. 284 (284 + 247 = 531).

Diocletian was a ruthless emperor who persecuted the Christians and reigned from A.D. 284-305. The monk Dionysius' system was based upon his guess as to the year of Christ's birth and, while using the same initials A and D, replaced the hated "Diocletian" with the loved "Domini – Lord". The addition of B.C. (Before Christ) dating was added two centuries later by Bede in A.D. 731.[69]

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What Are "Regnal Years and Accession Years?"

Regnal dating is the process whereby it is determined who gets credit for reigning in a specific year if a king dies and a successor begins to reign in the middle of that year. Since regnal dating is so often a topic of discussion in chronology, the following information on the subject is valuable. This quote from Finegan explains the concept in a concise yet thorough way (the information within the brackets is an insertion by this writer):

> In the accession-year system the portion of a year from the accession of the king to the end of the then current calendar year is only his "accession year" (and for chronological purposes remains a part of the last numbered regnal year of his predecessor) [the new king gets no credit for the partial year served], and the new king's Year 1 begins only on the first day of the new calendar year after his accession. In the nonaccession-year system the portion of a calendar year, no matter how brief, remaining from the accession of the king to the end of the then current calendar year is treated not as an uncounted accession year but as already Year 1 of the new king; therewith the preceding king fails to be credited with that calendar year as a regnal year in which he does not live out a full year on the throne.[70]

This text has already proved Luke counted Tiberius' reign from his co-regency. Again, whether Luke marked the inception of the co-regency by actual dating, or the nonaccession-year regnal dating custom normally used within the Syrian region with its fall-oriented Macedonian calendar, it would not alter the fact that John the Baptist started his ministry during the 15th year of Tiberius as Luke 3:1 records.

Accepting that John the Baptist began his ministry between early January and early February of A.D. 26, as has been discussed, and accepting the dating of Tiberius' reign described in chapter 7, the following can be asserted.

> Based upon the passing of the Roman Senate's law codifying Tiberius' co-regency, John started his ministry only days or at most four months into Tiberius' 15th year.
>
> Based upon nonaccession-year dating and a fall start to Tiberius' reign John's ministry began between four and five months after the start of Tiberius' 15th year.

Although Jewish customs regarding regnal years are irrelevant to the dating of Tiberius' reign over the provinces of Rome, the following is provided for those curious. As has been shown, at the start of the Davidic monarchy the Jews counted the reigns of kings from the fall civic calendar. Yet, the Talmud, the writing down of the oral traditions of the Jews which occurred over a period of centuries beginning a couple centuries after Christ's ministry on Earth, suggests the Jews had by that time adopted a different point to recognize the reign of kings. It recorded the Jews used a nonaccession-year dating counting successive each year of a rulers reign as beginning 1 *Nisan* in the spring. This quote is included from a rabbinic discussion of the Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah - oral tradition of the Jews):

> If a king ascends the throne of the twenty-ninth of *Adar* (the 12th month), as soon as the first of *Nisan* (the first month) arrives he is reckoned to have reigned a year. This teaches us that *Nisan* is the New Year for kings, and that one day in a year is reckoned as a year. But if he ascended

> the throne on the first of *Nisan* he is not reckoned to have reigned a year till the next first of *Nisan* comes round.[71]

Although it is uncertain the exact period to which this Gemara refers, it appears the majority consensus of Jewish scholarship during the time of Christ would have regarded Tiberius' reign, on a "nonaccession-year dating" basis beginning years of reign in the spring.

By this system, Tiberius' 15th year would have been from 1 *Nisan* A.D. 25 - 1 *Nisan* of A.D. 26, March 18, A.D. 25 - April 6, A.D. 26.[72] Therefore:

> Based upon nonaccession-year dating and a spring start to years of reign, Tiberius' 15th year of reign was between ten and eleven months old when John began his ministry.

Even this system fits and supports the dating in this work.

To reiterate, Jewish thought during Luke's time held that a reign began with the inception of a co-regency regardless of the date or regnal dating.[73] This fact means, even if Luke concerned himself with Jewish thought regarding their calendar dating of reigns, he would have used actual dating for the co-regency.

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Converting Julian and Gregorian Calendar Dates to Jewish Calendar Dates and Days of the Week

The diligent work done by scholars who understood the difference between calendars and took the time to make systems and tables to translate between Jewish, Julian, or Gregorian dates is impressive.[74]

This text has made use of the website of M. J. Beattie,

"Church of God Study Forum" (CGSF) to retrieve dates or days of the week. Nevertheless, CGSF's Jewish calendar dates for the year of Christ's Crucifixion is flawed. It appears their decision to "correct" the days of the week for a few years to achieve a predetermined goal regarding the Crucifixion of Christ inserted error. Beattie humbly recognizes the limitation of trying to match certain dates in the Julian calendar with uncertain dates in ancient Jewish calendars and admits their adjustment of dating in the years near the Crucifixion to suit an agenda. Here is how Beattie expresses the challenge and their adjustments:

> The "Hebrew" years shown on this web site match the Rabbinic calendar which has been in use by the majority of the Jews at least since the writing of Maimonides' *Mishnah Torah* (1170-1180 AD). (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Calendar and related articles.) This is a calculated calendar, with the beginnings of months and years established by Rabbinic rules for computation and 'postponements' of new moons. The calculations result in months and years that approximate, but are *not* in complete harmony with the natural lunar and solar cycles.
>
> The "Hebrew" years illustrated here prior to the time of Maimonides are hypothetical, superimposing the Rabbinic computations backward in time through 142 AD. Prior to 142 AD the same Rabbinic methods of computation are used here, **except that a change in arrangement of leap years was made to "correct" a <u>presumed</u> calendar drift, thus allowing for the calculated calendar to support a Wednesday, 31 AD Crucifixion of Jesus Christ**.

> In reality, in ancient times the beginning of months in the Holy Land was determined (weather permitting) by the actual observation of the first visible lunar crescent...[75] (bolding and underlining added)

The calendar of CGSF does not associate 14 *Nisan* with a Wednesday in A.D. 28. Yet Beattie admits dependence on less than definite information for determining Jewish calendar dates. Beattie acknowledges the CGSF site can be off a few days, and this would certainly affect the day of the week on their Jewish calendar for events in A.D. 28. Again, although respecting their transparency, the attempt to "correct" information based upon "presumed" events with a specific date or day goal in mind opened their Jewish calendar to error for the year in question.

The United States Naval Observatory and onlineconversion.com's Julian dating conversion confirms what CGSF asserts, April 28 of A.D. 28 was in fact a Wednesday. Yet more important to this study is when the new year would have begun in the Jewish calendar that year and what day in the week 14 *Nisan* was in A.D. 28. Assuming the night sky allowed for some visibility, Astronomy provides the answer when the Jewish year would have begun. All the following sites support the evening of April 14 of A.D. 28 as the first sighting of the new moon beginning that Jewish month and year.

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- Bradley E. Schaefer, *Lunar Visibility and the Crucifixion*, Royal Astronomical Society Quarterly Journal, 1990. V. 31 (No. 1/Mar): p. 53.

- http://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/SpringPhenom.php

Therefore, the first day of the month, 1 *Nisan*, for A.D. 28 would have been from sunset Wednesday April 14 - sunset April 15. The Day of Preparation was always 14 *Nisan*. Christ was Crucified on the Day of Preparation. Putting the prior information together confirms the Crucifixion death of Christ would have been the afternoon of Wednesday, 14 *Nisan* or April 28 of A.D. 28. After sunset Wednesday evening as the Passover meal began for most of the Jews, it became 15 *Nisan*. This information matches the chronological position of this book.

As noted, onlineconversion.com provides Julian dating. The Julian dating system was used in the first century A.D. Gregorian dating only began in A.D. 1582. When Gregorian dating was implemented 10 days were inserted into the calendar after October 4th to adjust the date to the Gregorian calendar based upon a 365.2425 day solar year from the Julian 365.25 solar year. (The correct current solar year is 365.24219). The number of days to insert was chosen to make December 25th true to its date in the year of the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325. The thinking was to protect the "true date" of Christ's birth "December 25" in that year and make every December 25th from 1582 forward to be accurate to that point in the solar year.

For one wishing to study the topic of accurate Julian dating further, Jack Finegan's book, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1964, is very useful. Direct attention to pages 291-298.

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What's in a Name?

Did using the names associated with false gods matter to God? If the Israelites ceased to use the names for a time in an attempt to honor God, I believe that attitude in and of itself would have been pleasing to God. Did God judge Israel for using month names reflecting pagan culture later in their history? Maybe a better question is how does God feel about Christians in our time doing the same thing? For example, our Resurrection Day has become Easter, a derivation of the name of a false goddess, Eostre, worshiped by the Saxons.[76] It could be argued, when Christians follow the lead of culture and media instead of God's Word it is worse than using the name of false gods for months.

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5 Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* 223-226.

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